



KWANTLEN  
POLYTECHNIC  
UNIVERSITY

# Creative Writing Program Review Self-Study Report

Report Submission Date: August 31, 2022

Program Review Team Members:

Aislinn Hunter

Jen Currin

Nicola Harwood

Ross Laird

Cathy Stonehouse

Cathleen With

## Table of Contents

List of Acronyms .....	1
Memo from Dean/Associate Dean.....	2
1. Introduction.....	7
1.1. Overview of the Program .....	7
1.2. Program Department .....	9
1.3 Program Purpose .....	10
1.4. Issues for Program Review .....	10
2. Curriculum Review .....	13
2.1. The Educated Person.....	13
2.2. Program Learning Outcomes.....	17
2.3. Essential Skill Development.....	20
2.4. Curriculum Analysis .....	22
3. Program Relevance and Demand .....	24
3.1 Relevance and Currency.....	24
3.2 Faculty Qualifications and Currency.....	27
3.3 Student Demand.....	30
4. Effectiveness of Instructional Delivery .....	37
4.1 Instructional Design and Delivery of Curriculum.....	37
4.2 Student Success.....	47
5. Resources, Services, and Facilities.....	52
6. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	60

## List of Acronyms

BCCAT: British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and people of colour

CLO: Course Learning Outcomes

CRWR: Creative Writing

DFW: Drop, Fail, Withdraw rate

FAEAF: Faculty of Arts Excellence and Advancement Fund

KPU: Kwantlen Polytechnic University

MAP: My Academic Plan

OPA: Office of Planning & Accountability

PAC: Program Advisory Committee

PIPS: Polytechnic Ink Publishing Society

PLO: Program Learning Outcomes

SLA: Student Learning Assistant

SSCPR: Senate Standing Committee on Program Review

SFU: Simon Fraser University

TWS: The Writer's Studio (at SFU, Continuing Studies)

UBC: The University of British Columbia

UBCO: The University of British Columbia Okanagan

UFV: University of the Fraser Valley

UVic: The University of Victoria

VFS: Vancouver Film School

WIR: Writer-in-residence



»»» Where thought meets action

**TO: Creative Writing Department and Senate Standing Committee on Program Review**

**CC:**

**FROM: Shelley Boyd, Dean; Greg Millard, Dean pro tem**

**DATE: August 28, 2022**

**SUBJECT: Self-Study Report for Creative Writing's Program Review**

---

#### Program Overview

Firstly, all faculty, staff, and students relating to CRWR deserve recognition and gratitude for meeting the extraordinary challenges of the pandemic with grace and aplomb. In the midst of these difficult years, the program has also encountered unanticipated staffing challenges. CRWR has succeeded and thrived in the teeth of these challenges.

Following its last review, CRWR de-laddered and simplified its prerequisite structures to make program progression more straightforward, and significantly diversified its content through the introduction of Special Topics courses. CRWR has also nurtured transfer pathways (e.g., with the Vancouver Film School) as well as advanced placement opportunities with a local high school – important steps toward the ultimate goal of defining CRWR as a 'destination' program.

CRWR has made headway in fostering anti-oppression awareness and practice through the formation of a reading group, the incorporation of marginalized voices into course content, and the pursuit of a more inclusive approach to its minimum qualifications.

The Creative Writing program is unquestionably fulfilling its purpose. Fill rates have been good, data suggests that its Program Learning Outcomes are being met, and surveys indicate a high level of belief in the occupational relevance of the program; indeed, 100% of industry respondents agree that CRWR prepares its students for the workplace. Graduates show a solid track record of professional achievement and success in graduate study. CRWR also enjoys an unusually dynamic culture outside the classroom, with an array of creative writing groups signaling a very healthy extra-curricular learning environment.

#### Areas for Improvement or Development

As the Report observes, some of CRWR's official course outlines could stand to be revised so as to more explicitly articulate their learning outcomes. This is not a failure of learning outcomes per se, but rather an administrative lacuna, easily addressed through curricular revision processes.

The program could benefit from exploring additional ways of fulfilling its mandate, e.g., through micro-credentialing and efforts to attract experienced learners. Liaising with the Director, Flexible Learning ([marcelina.piotrowski@kpu.ca](mailto:marcelina.piotrowski@kpu.ca)) could help to facilitate this.

The Report shows a keen desire to continue deepening experiential and employment-related opportunities for students. A number of smaller programs in the Faculty of Arts have found it beneficial to participate in [ARTS 4800](#) (Arts Practicum). Whether this structure, which tends to have a 'social science' orientation, could be adapted for CRWR is a question worth exploring.

Although the Report expresses skepticism about a program advisory committee, the Dean's Office encourages all programs to develop a PAC. Rather than assume that the professional currency of CRWR faculty makes a PAC redundant, we would suggest that a PAC could offer an opportunity to further expand the program's connections with the industry (e.g., by directly linking with publishers, editors, etc.) and further enhance opportunities for job placements, experiential learning, and practicums.

On a related note, CRWR has room to deepen its ties to alumni. A PAC could be one channel for maintaining these ties, as could an 'alumni club,' perhaps connected through social media, or a distribution list.

### Career Outcomes for CRWR Graduates

CRWR graduates find work in writing and publishing, in the media and arts sectors writ large, and of course in other fields that place a premium upon such skills as oral and written expression and strong interpersonal skills. The Report provides anecdotal evidence of an impressive array of accomplishments by alumni, and documents a successful track record of placing students in graduate programs in Creative Writing, Education, Library Sciences, and English. CRWR 3303 is required for the program and focuses on the Business of Writing; this practical emphasis is reinforced by selected topics courses, as well as by a strong departmental culture of informal mentorship. Interestingly, different faculty appear to emphasize different things in delivering CRWR 3303; this can be a productive tension, not necessarily a problem, provided no indispensable aspects of the subject are neglected. Given its centrality to the curriculum, though, CRWR might wish to review the course outline to make certain that students can be assured of this.

### Viability and Continued Development of the Program

- CRWR's curriculum is robust. We have no concerns about program viability at present.
- As the Review notes, the 'new media' stream would benefit from greater promotion and clarification to students. Meanwhile, attempts to decolonize and diversify the curriculum are ongoing. The program's disproportionate reliance on domestic students could conceivably develop into a challenge as time passes, *if* domestic enrolment at KPU continues to decline (and we hasten to emphasize that institution is working to mitigate this risk). Continued efforts to make CRWR a 'destination' program would help, and the department shows a robust

commitment to this. The prospect of a ‘concept focused rather than writing intensive’ introductory course targeting international students is intriguing; we invite the department to renew its consideration of this idea.

- Another innovative suggestion mooted in the Report is the creation of an all-online minor degree in Creative Writing. A more perspicuous formulation might frame this as a new online *stream* for the pre-existing minor; this would remove any need for formal program development and frame the challenge as one of delivery. The hope would be that such a model would be of particular appeal to mature learners. It could also draw from a much wider pool of domestic students than KPU’s immediate catchment area. Nonetheless, the logistical obstacles could prove considerable, as the Report observes. CRWR should continue to explore the idea. If coordinating the effort becomes unduly onerous, 0.6 PD funds afford hope of a time release.
- The Report indicates an interest in liaising with Arts’s forthcoming Indigenous Writer-in-Residence. We look forward to supporting, and learning from, this potentially exciting relationship.

The integration of Entertainment Arts (ENTA) into our Faculty may represent an opportunity for CRWR to expand its network in a new direction – i.e., the realm of digital arts, and in particular, writing for video games. While ENTA is still in its early stages and may not yet have the infrastructure and bandwidth to richly engage with other programs, we do encourage CRWR to think about building its ties with the program, a process with which the Dean’s Office can assist.

#### Challenges and Opportunities for Program Growth

- Student demand for Creative Writing courses is solid. CRWR, as a relatively small program, needs to remain vigilant that its education planning offers students adequate choice and efficient pathways to graduation – and it should be attentive to the need to communicate those pathways to students on an ongoing basis.
- At present, the summer semester is marginal to CRWR’s planning (e.g., only three sections were offered in Summer 2022). While CRWR waitlists from last semester do not imply a huge untapped summer demand, we do know that many Arts students are seeking a wider range of summer offerings; so CRWR might benefit from experimenting with more summer courses.
- CRWR, as noted above, has room to grow its appeal to mature learners and to international students.
- CRWR offers a dynamic and successful program within the Lower Mainland context. CRWR shows a lively attunement to evolving dynamics in the field, adjusting its curriculum in light of emerging technologies, industry dynamics, and social concerns. We applaud CRWR’s commitment to indigenization and deepened engagement with marginalized perspectives. Although, despite the implicit hopes of the Self Study, the department is unlikely to receive additional sections for the sole purpose of creating space to hire a BIPOC faculty member, inclusive hiring (consistent with KPU’s duties under the BC Human Rights Code and HR best practice) should certainly be foregrounded in future searches. Revised minimum qualifications will help as well.

CRWR shows a lively attunement to evolving dynamics in the field, adjusting its curriculum in light of emerging technologies, industry dynamics, and social concerns. The department also practices significant community outreach, sponsoring youth writing competitions and literary events, participating in reading

series, connecting to high schools in the catchment, and so on. All told, CRWR is a strong and vibrant program; the Report's recommendations for further adjustments are largely sound, in our view.

#### Resources, Institutional Support, and/or External Support for Program Growth and Development

We encourage the development of an external advisory committee (PAC) for CRWR. Further resources and supports relating to indigenization and decolonization would be of benefit to the entire institution, and especially to programs which show the keen interest in these themes demonstrated by Creative Writing in its Self-Study. Arts's pilot Educational Consultant on Indigenization and Decolonization may be of help on this front, as may the Indigenous Writer-in-Residence.

Not unrelatedly, CRWR's Self-Study expresses a concern with the traditional desk arrangements in KPU classrooms. Arts has been exploring reserving certain classrooms for circular or non-traditional arrangements, so there may be synergies between these discussions and CRWR's concerns, as well as with CRWR's desire for a designated Creative Writing classroom. That being said, space limitations are a vexing, ongoing challenge for KPU as a whole, and we must be careful not to over-promise here. An expanded CRWR space will prove difficult to accomplish in the current environment. Still, the Dean's Office will continue its ongoing dialogue with Facilities and University Space over these, and other, possibilities for improving Arts spaces.

The program largely has what it requires with respect to human resources, though the Self Study notes the need for enriched mental health resources.

Recommended areas of focus for the short range, mid-range, and long range for program direction and improvement

##### *Short range (< 6 months):*

- Create working groups (communities of practice) around the teaching of commonly-taught courses
- Liaise with Arts' Indigenous Writer in Residence

##### *Mid-range (6 months – 2 years):*

- Revise course outlines to ensure alignment with PLOs
- Revise Minimum Qualifications for inclusivity
- Deepen engagement with decolonizing perspectives, e.g., through outreach to Arts's Education Consultant on Indigenization and Decolonization
- Develop a PAC
- Explore participation in Arts 4800, as well as the considering enhancing the mentorship aspects of 4150 and 4250
- Revise and enhance informational and promotional materials about the program

##### *Long range (>2 years):*

- Galvanize the new media stream
- Liaise with Director, Flexible Learning ([marcelina.piotrowski@kpu.ca](mailto:marcelina.piotrowski@kpu.ca)) to explore strategies for micro-credential development and attracting mature learners
- Pursue the creation of online delivery structure for the Minor, if feasible
- Strengthen infrastructure for maintaining connections with alumni
- Build connections with ENTA

### External Connections and Support

The department has a track record of faculty outreach to local schools and connections with the local arts community. A further step forward in terms of outreach would be the development of an external advisory committee (PAC).

### Final Comments

The department has come through an unusually challenging time, and is to be congratulated for producing a thoughtful Self Study under onerous conditions.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview of the Program

### *Program Under Review*

The Creative Writing department is an undergraduate program that is part of the Faculty of Arts at KPU. KPU is a polytechnic university located in the metro Vancouver region of British Columbia, an area which overlaps with the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem peoples. The university has five campuses: two located in Surrey, and one each in Richmond, Langley, and Cloverdale. Designated as a polytechnic in 2008, KPU offers bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, diplomas, certificates and citations in more than 140 programs serving close to 20,000 learners each year. As a polytechnic, part of KPU's mission involves integrating theory, critical insight, and practice.

Creative Writing courses have been taught at Kwantlen Polytechnic University since 1981 when the institution was founded as Kwantlen College. At that time two first- and two second-year courses were offered. Over the intervening four decades, the institution has expanded (first through being granted university college status in 1995, and then university status in 2008) and the Creative Writing department has grown with it, implementing a BA Major in Creative Writing in 2011 and graduating our first Creative Writing BA major in 2013.

The Creative Writing department's growth over the last 40 years has occurred in a variety of areas: we now have 33 unique course offerings (running 38 sections each year), several online and mixed mode delivery options, a Bachelor of Arts major (54 credits) and minor (36 credits), and an Associates of Arts degree (15 credits). Our courses are transferrable to other institutions with writing programs in the Lower Mainland and the province, including Douglas College, the University of the Fraser Valley, the University of Victoria, and UBC.

The Creative Writing department is a home for those who love creativity, imagination and critical thinking about the self, about others, and the world we share. As this self-study will demonstrate the department is known for fostering a strong sense of community which supports emerging writers to discover their voice, develop their craft, and express their vision. The department embraces an environment that is collaborative, creative, and respectful. Our teaching methods are based on the principle of mentorship, and support an innovative, interdisciplinary classroom experience that facilitates critical awareness, cultural sensitivity, social responsibility, civic engagement, and global citizenship.

## *Admission Requirements*

Admission to the Creative Writing program is classified as open intake – there is no set limit to the number of students admitted. In terms of admission requirements, all applicants to undergraduate studies in the Faculty of Arts must satisfy the Faculty of Art’s undergraduate admission requirement, which includes KPU’s undergraduate English proficiency requirement. There are no additional admission requirements to study in the Creative Writing program, however, students wanting to take our introductory course, CRWR 1100, must have English 12 with a B or above (which is higher than the undergraduate admission requirement) or be waived in based on a portfolio or other instructor-based assessment. The portfolio/prior learning assessment option is especially important for our mature student applicants who may have degrees in other fields, or work/life experience that demonstrates a strong proficiency in the English language. Generally, new KPU students with less than a B grade in English 12 wait to take CRWR 1100 in their 2<sup>nd</sup> term, after they’ve taken their ENGL 1100 which allows them to take Creative Writing 1100, 1200, or 1240 while still in their first year.

## *Credential and Curricular Requirements*

Currently, in addition to the Bachelor of Arts general framework criteria, students must meet the following minimum requirements to graduate with a BA Major in Creative Writing:

Completion of the four core CRWR courses:

- CRWR 1100
- CRWR 1200
- CRWR 3303
- CRWR 4150

as well as

- ENGL 1100
- 3 additional credits from ENGL at the 1200-level
- 9 additional credits in CRWR at the 1000 / 2000 level
- 24 credits from CRWR at the 3000 / 4000 level (with a minimum of 3 credits being at the 4000 level)

(54 credits total)

Please see Appendix A for a full list of the course requirements for the CRWR BA program. Please see Appendix B for KPU’s BA Framework.

All KPU students intending to graduate with a Bachelor’s degree from the Faculty of Arts in Creative Writing must declare the credential by the time they complete 60 credits of undergraduate coursework. At the time of declaration, the student must:

- be in good academic standing with the University

- have completed of a minimum of 18 credits of undergraduate coursework including the following with a minimum grade of C:
  - 3 credits of ENGL at the 1100 level or higher
  - 6 credits at the 1100 level or higher in the Major area

### *Transferability*

KPU is a member of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) an organization that oversees articulation agreements across institutions in the province. A KPU Creative Writing department representative also attends annual CRWR articulation meetings hosted at different institutions throughout the province and attended by representatives of most of the province's 2-4 year Writing degree programs. As mentioned earlier, KPU CRWR courses are transferrable to a number of institutions including UFV, UBC, UBCO, SFU and UVic. Originally, when we only offered two years of Creative Writing classes, KPU was considered a 'sending institution' (an institution offering only two years of writing courses which required our dedicated writing students to transfer *out* to other institutions offering full degree Creative Writing programs for their third and fourth years). We are now a 'receiving institution' offering advanced classes to students from Douglas College, Langara College, and other distant colleges or universities who do not have four-year writing programs. To this end, the Creative Writing department at KPU has fostered and/or formalized articulation agreements with other institutions to develop clear pathways for students hoping to transfer to KPU to continue in Creative Writing. These pathways range from formal transfer agreements with Douglas College and The Vancouver Film School which (as of 2023) will offer a KPU Creative Writing BA pathway for Film School writers, to advanced placement opportunities in CRWR 1100 for grade 12 writing students at the Langley Fine Arts School (an arts-based secondary school in our catchment).

## **1.2. Program Department**

The Creative Writing department has eight permanent faculty members who teach a range of genres, including poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, writing for new media, hybrid forms, screenwriting, and playwriting. We also have a roster of sessional instructors with various specializations who are employed when course work becomes available. The majority of our face-to-face and hybrid classes are offered on the Surrey campus, though before the pandemic, we regularly offered first-year classes on the Richmond and Langley campuses.

Our faculty are practicing writers/practitioners who have published numerous works and have received many accolades including winning provincial and international literary awards, receiving competitive grants for research and/or the creation of their works, having dramatic productions of their work staged in Canada and the United States, and having their writing adapted into other creative forms such as film, dance, and visual art. The department's faculty are respected among their literary and academic peers and are rated highly by students in student survey assessments.

Since the Dean of Arts Teaching Award inception, a number of the faculty have been nominated for, or have won, Dean of Arts Teaching Awards.

The Creative Writing department Chair position is a two- or three-year term. The Chair, or Co-Chairs, are elected by faculty. The Chair position is given a two-course time-release per calendar year. If there are two Co-Chairs the time releases are divided (each Chair receiving one course time-release). The Chair attends monthly Chairs meetings and works with an Associate Dean (assigned to Creative Writing) and the Dean of Arts. The Creative Writing department also has a Departmental Administrative Assistant whom we share with Journalism and Communication Studies.

### **1.3. Program Purpose**

The purpose of the program is to provide learners with a dynamic, engaging, and relevant curriculum taught in a variety of modes and genres, and to cultivate and celebrate creativity, diversity, and curiosity. While writing and reading critically are both fundamental to literacy, our program develops and expands on basic literacy skills to explore and engage with language as a nuanced, malleable, and powerful tool for expression and art-making. The Creative Writing program supports KPU's mandate to provide excellent educational opportunities to learners in our catchment areas, and to provide learners with the knowledge, core competencies, and skills characteristic of traditional Bachelor of Arts programs. Our program also reflects the institution's mandate to provide learners with a polytechnic and interdisciplinary curriculum — one that celebrates imagination, innovation, applied skill-sets, and craft.

#### *Changes Since Program Launch*

After our first program review and self-study the department de-laddered many of the prerequisite pairings and streams students were expected to adhere to in order to progress through the program. This self-study is intended to offer an opportunity for faculty to evaluate the success of that de-laddering in terms of our students' ability to graduate in a reasonable period of time, our students' overall satisfaction with their educational outcomes, and faculty members' satisfaction with the new curriculum.

### **1.4. Issues for Program Review**

The following program-specific issues are addressed in this self-study.

#### *1. Curriculum*

In this program review, the Creative Writing department seeks to find out if the major curriculum changes that we made in 2016 as a result of data gathered from our last program review have benefitted our students in terms of learning outcomes and progression through the program. The results of our last program review indicated that the Creative Writing department program pathway was too rigid for our students, causing them to take longer to graduate because they had to wait to take certain required courses during the semesters they were offered. As stated above, in our curriculum revision, we de-laddered our courses, making it easier for students to move through our

pathway in a timely fashion. Students also expressed in the surveys conducted for our last program review that they wanted more diversity of course offerings. To meet this need, we developed our 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year Special Topic courses (2900 and 3400), which we now run every semester either as genre courses (Writing Young Adult Narratives, Graphic Narratives, Speculative Fiction, Horror, Fantasy, etc.) or as multi-genre themed courses (Research Methodologies for Writers, Writing as Witness, Writing Hybrid Forms, Writing and Nature, Writing and Wellness, and so on). The Special Topics courses have been very popular with students and have excellent fill rates. From this program review, the Creative Writing department hopes to discover if our students are satisfied with the level and type of instruction they are receiving in our program, and if the current course offerings meet their needs.

## *2. Equity and Ethics*

Since our last program review, there has been a deepened focus on social justice issues and equity for our students. This has resulted in some consultation work with the faculty as a whole and some voluntary/individual or group training for faculty around issues of equity and diversity. In 2020, a group of Creative Writing faculty formed an anti-oppression reading group to further educate ourselves so that we can better serve BIPOC students, trans and non-binary students, neuroatypical students, and students from other demographics. While this work is ongoing, we hope that our student survey will further our understanding of students' experiences and needs.

## *3. Community-Building and Professional Development*

Another aspect of the program we would like to assess is community-building and professional development. Most creative writers, regardless of the form they practice in, end up working in community, whether via the traditional writer/editor or writer/publisher relationships or through collaborative projects or installations or in workshop spaces. With this in mind, and in light of the difficulties of fostering community in the early stages of the pandemic, our department would like to further assess the kinds of peer-support networks we foster, the kinds of professional opportunities we provide students with, and the modes of interaction we facilitate between professional/visiting writers and our students. New initiatives across the institution such as the Service Learning Student Assistant Program (utilized by Creative Writing for the first time in the Summer 2022 semester) and the ARTS 3991, 3992 and 3993 Undergraduate Research courses are, and may, present further opportunities for students to develop skills and relationships that will benefit them after graduation. The department is also hoping to undertake a review and re-visioning of our reading series model in order to ensure excellent experiences for our visiting writers and for KPU students both within and without the Creative Writing department.

## *4. Enrollment and Promotion*

Creative Writing classes have excellent fill-rates and our first-year classes are a popular elective. Mature students who make their way to our program have said they feel welcome and supported in their creative pursuits. However, the majority of our majors didn't come to KPU and take Creative Writing intending to major in the program – they only discovered, as they continued in the program, that a writing degree aligned with their sense of vocation. Identifying ways to recruit potential writing majors to KPU would allow the program to grow. While the faculty may have ideas around

ways to do this, our faculty (the majority of whom are part-time) already offer so much service in other ways (in terms of committee work and extra-curricular initiatives) that a well-constructed marketing campaign seems beyond our reach. We would like to grow our program, or at least become a destination for aspiring writers in our catchment areas – especially given the quality of the program and student satisfaction rates.

## 2. Curriculum Review

### 2.1. The Educated Person

#### *Pathways to Employment*

*What kind of occupations are your graduates prepared to pursue?*

As one of the most essential tools a citizen can possess, a foundational degree in the art of writing offers practitioners access to a wide range of disciplines and careers. Graduates of the Creative Writing program have many options open to them following graduation. Their training in Creative Writing prepares them for a variety of positions in the arts sector and elsewhere, including, but not limited to, employment in the broader humanities/social sciences sectors, in business or commerce, and in media arts/arts technology sectors. Our graduates can be found working in the writing and publishing sectors, in libraries, in education, in social service organizations, in the film industry, in bookstores, for arts nonprofits, for newspapers and magazines, at learning centers and student engagement offices at universities, for labor unions, in administrative positions at a variety of businesses, and for literary festivals. Some of our graduates elect to become self-employed doing contract work for arts organizations, or working as freelance editors, or doing blog and article writing to support their own businesses. One graduate, who started a successful kitchen-garden business, frequently gives presentations at large home-and-garden shows incorporating her passion for storytelling and writing into her presentations on kitchen-garden design and eco-practices. Her first literary publication was in an international anthology of travel writing and she continues to write.

Overall, our graduates are well-prepared for any position that involves strong oral and written skills, public speaking, critical thinking, leadership, and advanced interpersonal skills. Many graduates hope, and choose, to continue to work as writers (writing, revising, and submitting work for publication) or in writing organizations – working diligently to acquire publications and literary-world work experience. Several of our former students are involved in the literary community, working for, or having worked for, organizations such as Vancouver’s Growing Room Literary Arts Festival, the Vancouver Writer’s Festival, and the Unbound Poetry Festival, a festival started by a KPU Creative Writing alumnus who is also the president of the Delta Literary Arts Society. Others have organized reading series such as Poetic Justice which is put on by the Royal City Literary Arts Society, or one-off literary events such as ‘All Forms Now,’ a recent poetry reading at the New Westminster Library organized by a Creative Writing graduate who is the British Columbia-Yukon Regional Representative for the League of Canadian Poets. Creative Writing graduates have also worked for magazines such as *Rice Paper* and *Room*, and have published widely in magazines and journals across Canada, including *The Malahat Review*, *CV2*, *Arc*, *The Capilano Review*, *Room Magazine*, *PRISM*, *The Fiddlehead*, *subTerrain*, *Poetry Is Dead*, *Prairie Fire*, *Event*, *Yellow Medicine Review*, *Grain*, and elsewhere. Our graduates have won prizes such as Prism International’s Short Fiction Contest, the Lush Triumphant Poetry Prize (awarded by *subTerrain* magazine) and the Young Bucks Poetry Prize (awarded by *CV2*), the Grand Slam Poetry Championship in Vancouver (twice), and have been short or long-listed for prestigious writing prizes such as the Alfred G. Bailey Poetry

Prize and the CBC Poetry Prize. At least four of our former students/graduates have full-length books published or forthcoming, and another Creative Writing alumna recently published a chapbook with Vancouver's esteemed Rahila's Ghost Press. Two former students now teach creative writing – one at the post-secondary level and one at the secondary school level – and many of our alumni and students have been paid to run workshops and speak on panels, most recently a student who ran a workshop for the Massey Arts Society (an organization dedicated to promoting Indigenous and BIPOC artists) on writing land-based poetry. Several of our graduates have received BC Arts Council Grants or Canada Council grants to fund their post-graduate writing projects.

*How are you preparing your graduates for jobs in this field, future changes in this field, and the job market in general?*

In terms of preparing our graduates for employment and changes in the industry, the department has started offering strategic courses to further assist students in gaining expertise in a variety of specialized professional skills. While CRWR 3303 (The Business of Writing) is already a required course for the degree (CRWR 3303 often includes grant writing modules as well as information about the publishing industry, agents, self-publishing and creating sustainable writing practices grounded in self-care) we are offering a number of Special Topics classes in 2022/2023 that will further students' professional development, such as CRWR 3400 'Teaching Creative Writing,' CRWR 3400 'Editing for Writers,' and CRWR 3400 'Oral Literature and Performance.'

As our faculty predominantly identify as working and publishing authors, Creative Writing course content and pedagogy keeps pace with current developments in writing and publishing. Active writers and creators are aware of national trends in publishing and in book buying and often incorporate those trends (the current interest in decolonizing the expected structure of the short story, for example) into craft discourse and lessons. Assigning texts and readings by contemporary writers also helps our students to become, and stay current in the culture, as do discussions and lessons on engaging in new media (and literary social media) platforms creatively and ethically.

### *Pathways to Future Study*

#### *Preparation for Graduate School / Graduate-level Training*

Although preparing students for graduate studies in Creative Writing is something the original curriculum was designed to support (ensuring, for example, that students had enough upper-level experience across a range of genres to be able to submit a diverse cross-genre portfolio as required by most MFA programs), the curriculum is also designed to support those students wanting to leverage their undergraduate degree into Masters degrees in other areas. Our majors, double majors and minors have predominantly gone on to graduate-level study in one of four fields: Creative Writing, Education, Library Sciences, or English (usually in programs that support interdisciplinary creative work or literary practitioner perspectives such as UBCO's MFA or SFU's MA in English). Students minoring in Creative Writing and majoring in other programs often state that they hope to develop their writing skills (with publication as a possible goal) alongside their chosen discipline/educational pathway through developing a sustainable writing practice even as they



pursue other careers. As routes to publication continue to shift (and, arguably, widen) in the digital age, students seem to feel less need or pressure to do an MFA in order to secure a career as a writer or creator. Other post-BA education pathways, including certificate courses (such as SFU's Writer's Studio), workshops (more widely available nationally after the move online during the pandemic), mentorships (such as those offered by the Vancouver Manuscript Intensive) and so on, have become a medium through which our graduating writers can continue to develop their art. Many of our students have participated in professional development activities / forms of certification after graduation including studying at SFU's Writer's Studio, undertaking SFU's Editing diploma program, attending Banff's workshops and residencies, participating in Audible's Indigenous Writer's Circle mentorship program, or in Chelene Knight's Breathing Space Creative program, as well as undertaking mentorships at the Humber School for Writers, at Banff, Sage Hill, and online through Flying Books in Toronto. One of the benefits of these practitioner-based forms of post-BA study is the ability to choose one's mentor (an Indigenous writer, for example, choosing an Indigenous mentor, or a writer working on the poetics of place choosing a workshop on writing about the land) and to complete the undertaking in a shorter period of time.

*Is your program intended to be, in most cases, the terminal program in a student's educational experience, or do you typically expect them to take another program of study?*

The BA in Creative Writing prepares students to move past their initial literary apprenticeship stage and to become better writers and self-editors/editors – ideally moving into publishing or into the production of creative writing in magazines/performance/media or other relevant venues – without further study. That said, a writing apprenticeship in terms of learning the craft of writing is lifelong, and most writing students don't publish books without further apprenticeship, sometimes in the form of an MFA. A number of our graduates have gone on to attend MFA and MA programs at UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan, Simon Fraser University, the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, and elsewhere. Some graduates have gone on to pursue postgraduate degrees in English, some have received Masters of Library Science degrees and now work professionally as librarians. Some of our graduates have double majored in Counselling and Creative Writing, and have gone on to receive Masters degrees in Social Work or Psychology. Several of our graduates have enrolled in Teacher's Education programs after graduating from KPU and are now teaching in elementary and high schools in BC.

Appendix C, The Career Pathways Map, outlines some of the traditional pathways for writing students.

### *Pathways to an Enriched Civic and Personal Life*

*How well does your program curriculum develop skills an educated citizen should have?*

Our learning environment encourages lifelong learning. In the KPU Creative Writing department, learner engagement extends beyond the classroom to encompass relationships with community and industry partners and peers. Learners are encouraged to engage in the relevant issues of the day, their own stories and histories, and the broader literary community through building

relationships with our visiting authors, publishers, and festival partners, and producing and attending writing and performance events. Through offering educational training that combines creative expression, academic rigor, and critical thinking the department prepares learners for a range of future undertakings. Required courses include content that examines the creative writer's responsibility to our social/political context including our responsibilities as citizens to our shared histories and to creating a more equitable, diverse and inclusive culture. As stated above, some of our CRWR major and minor alumni have published books or have gone on to graduate-level studies. Students who have taken courses with us without majoring in the program have gone on to study and work in fields ranging from neuroscience to law. It is our belief that every Creative Writing course is an opportunity to connect a student to vital forms of expression, inquiry, and creativity which can benefit them no matter where their educational pathway ultimately takes them.

*Does your program help students to make more informed decisions in their personal and civic lives?*

Graduates of the Creative Writing program are well-prepared to take part in civic life and to continue to develop a rewarding personal life. Many Creative Writing students are already involved in meaningful ways in multiple communities even before they graduate, such as religious, queer, racialized, and immigrant communities. The personal and civic lives of writers are often very intertwined with their professional lives. True acts of creation and revision are almost always borne from a desire to communicate and share with an audience the sustained thinking, and exploration of, a topic (or topics) of concern to the writer undertaking the project. Unlike many kinds of jobs which can form – and inform – a 'part' of an individual's life and reality, many forms of writing work more like a vocation, informing (and emerging out of) one's personal life even as the public domain of the work is professional.

Because the professional and personal aspects of writing are often intertwined, Creative Writing classes also focus on wellness and on work/life balance issues. Attention to the processes of creativity includes developing a conscious relationship to personal values, patience, curiosity and self-inquiry. Many Creative Writing instructors practice mindfulness in their classes, and a significant number of students have shared that they greatly value this practice and have taken it up in their personal lives as well.

*Does your program equip students with new, or deepened literacies – be they digital, oral, written, etc.*

The Creative Writing program is, in part, about looking at the work of other successful and engaged writers to see how they've developed their ideas, art, and craft and then assisting learners in developing those skills and technologies (where relevant) in order to enable them to use their imaginations to speak to the issues and themes that matter to them. Learning to read *as a writer* is a unique form of literacy.

Digital literacy is developed through our new media stream and includes education in becoming an informed and critical digital citizen, creating works with design software as well as engaging creatively, and publishing on online platforms. There are also classes which touch on oral stories

and which engage in performance work. Often these literacies are combined and developed in tandem as evidenced by an example of a recent 4<sup>th</sup> year student's capstone work in CRWR 4150: an audio autoethnography about immigration and intergenerational trauma which involved interviews with family members, script-writing, digital/technological production skills, interpersonal sensitivity, and genre/form literacy.

## **2.2. Program Learning Outcomes**

The Creative Writing department revised some of our Program Learning Outcomes in 2021, amalgamating and revising some of the outcomes which were listed in our 2012 Program Review to better align with the evolution and purpose of KPU's 2023 Vision and our program. Our current Program Learning Outcomes are listed below:

1. Develop one's creative imagination and process, authoring a project from idea generation to polished completion
2. Demonstrate a solid grounding in critical thinking skills and research methods in relation to creative work
3. Identify the literary and/or cultural lineage one is working in and the associated literary principles and techniques
4. Communicate clearly in both writing and speech and demonstrate an ability to effectively use a wide range of creative writing and presentation techniques
5. Communicate a critical understanding of civic responsibility and socio-cultural issues alongside national, international, and global issues in relation to creative work and representation
6. Cultivate an inclusive community of writers; practice empathy and respect across differences and engage in group work in a constructive, ethical, and empathic manner
7. Consider and apply constructive feedback when making edits of one's creative work; articulate constructive, nuanced feedback on others' creative work
8. Demonstrate an awareness of one's biases, skills, habits, and abilities; be accountable for one's actions

*Are the program learning outcomes relevant to the current needs of the discipline/sector?*

The Creative Writing program at KPU helps students engage imaginatively with, and think critically about, language which is a fundamental tool in both a literary artist's practice and in other forms of employment. In the student survey (Appendix F) 55% of our current students said that they strongly agree that our program as a whole is relevant to their creative and career goals, with 32% somewhat agreeing. The responses in the alumni survey (please see Appendix G) to the same question mirrored this, with 56% of our alumni strongly agreeing that the curriculum was relevant to their creative and career goals, and 31% somewhat agreeing. In terms of overall satisfaction with the program 52% of our current students are very satisfied and 35% somewhat satisfied. Given that the student survey was undertaken in, and after, the disruption of the pandemic and the shift to online learning, these rates are satisfactorily high.

Despite the fact that our PLOs as presented in the student survey were only recently revised, student satisfaction in terms of the PLOs was also very high with all but one PLO (#2) being rated as a learning outcome that was covered in the program 'to large extent' by at least 50% of the respondents. A significant portion, 42% of students, agreed that PLO #2, 'Demonstrate a solid grounding and critical thinking skills and research methods in relation to creative work,' was present in their course learning outcomes to a large extent, with 38% saying to a moderate extent and 21% saying to a small extent. This is an area the department can improve upon in individual courses and also on the level of curriculum. (This summer, for example, we offered a CRWR 3400 class on 'Innovative and Creative Research Methods for Writers'). The student surveys demonstrate that our program is especially adept at PLOs #6, 7, 8, and 1 which, taken collectively, focus on community and creativity.

The Discipline/Sector respondents (please see Appendix H) identified a number of our PLOs as essential for work in the field, especially PLO #1 ('Develop one's creative imagination and process, authoring a project from idea generation to polished completion'), with 83% of respondents saying it was essential) and PLOs #2, 6, 7, and 8, with 67% noting these were essential skills. 50% of the industry respondents further stated that they believed KPU Creative Writing students or alumni were extremely prepared to work in their organization or pursue a career in the literary arts, while 50% answered this question as somewhat prepared. (Given the fields of expertise of the respondents this makes sense as the ability to work as a curator, CRWR teacher, or Chair of a Writing department would be limited without a graduate-level degree).

If we take the traditional writer's trajectory (the creation of creative or literary works and the publication or dissemination of that work by members of the creative or publishing industries) as a goal, our curriculum's emphasis on PLO #1 appears to be successful. Our student survey showed that 71% of students working in their final years of the degree (which is when publication in literary magazines tends to first occur) think that CRWR helps them develop their imagination and creative process to a large extent, with 29% stating the program does so to a moderate extent. As one student states in the survey: 'I appreciate that a lot of the work done in classes... is actually creating a portfolio... and I'm able to send that work out to magazines. Everything I learn is very relevant to skills I need.'

In the faculty survey (please see Appendix I) 67% of respondents strongly agreed that the program curriculum was *relevant* to the needs of the discipline/sector, with 17% somewhat agreeing, and 17% strongly disagreeing. Fewer respondents strongly agreed that the program *prepares students for a career* in the discipline/sector, with 33% strongly agreeing, 50% somewhat agreeing, and 17% strongly disagreeing. This outcome may, in part, be the result of the diversity found within the sector (how can one program prepare learners for the variety of potential outcomes in the field – from literary to commercial to technical writing and in a range of modes from self-employment to work with a variety of organizations or businesses), or it may reflect the perceived likelihood of a student needing a graduate degree in order to work gainfully as a writer.

Where our current curriculum is doing a good job in terms of educating students for a variety of future careers with a creative writing focus is in offering a variety of curriculum pathways that give students options as to what genres and platforms they want to focus on. For example, a student can focus on new media projects, screenplays, poetry, creative nonfiction or fiction (often in a variety of sub-genres). In many of the Special Topics classes students can work on the course theme in the genre(s) or form(s) of their choosing. Our capstone class (CRWR 4150, a requirement for the BA Major) is a rigorous class that is structured in such a way as to allow students to work on a sustained project in the genre and form of their choosing. On the student survey a number of students indicated course variety as a strength of the program along with '[t]he mix of courses that are dedicated to specific genres' and 'freedom for creativity.'

Faculty were unanimous in finding PLOs #1 and 4 extremely relevant to the current needs of the discipline and sector whereas PLO #7 'Consider and apply constructive feedback when making edits of one's creative work; articulate constructive, nuanced feedback on others creative work' only had 50% believing it was extremely relevant, 33% very relevant, and 17% saying not relevant at all. This may reflect current shifts in writing programs in general as institutions move away from relying on the workshop process in undergraduate curriculums. As one faculty respondent noted 'the curriculum continues to extol the use of a workshop model that is not evidence-based and does not need the needs of most learners.' Pivoting away from a reliance on the workshop model while still furthering students' self and peer-editing skills could be an area for development, especially if paired with the departments' continued interest in decolonial work. This would reflect changes in the sector. The writing and publishing industry, like many other creative fields, institutions and businesses, is undergoing significant shifts in response to the raising of social justice issues and issues of inequity. PLOs #3, 5, 6, and 8 have ethics and social justice at their core.

One area where our program has developed since the last self-study is its focus on foregrounding previously marginalized (especially BIPOC) voices and the incorporation of key units into some of our required courses (ensuring a unit on 'appropriation' is taught in CRWR 1200 for example). Decolonizing the curriculum has been an increasingly prioritized individual, departmental and institutional focus. On the individual level this work is being done through changing pedagogies, assigned readings and choices of guest speaker; on the departmental level it is being done through advocacy, conversation, and resource sharing, reading series selections, and the creation of a scholarship for Indigenous writers.

As the creative writing industry evolves, different technological skills may be expected of our students. Our new media stream teaches students how to engage technically and ethically with (and on) digital platforms, and how to create forms of literary and artful expression that live 'off' the printed page. Due to our limited number of course offerings however, we are not yet able to offer the full stream of our new media classes with any regularity. Students seem to be craving experience on digital platforms. For example, last year in two CRWR 3303 Business of Writing classes students were given a choice to either conceptualize and develop a writing-themed print-based anthology *or* a writing-themed podcast. All seven of the two classes' groups chose to conceptualize and create writing-themed podcasts. This work involved researching production tools and means, podcast platforms, social media marketing techniques, digital launch ideas, as well as surveying what sorts of writing-themed podcasts are already out there. As the literary landscape continues to develop and change (especially with the move to digital platforms for community literary events during, and after, the first couple of years of the pandemic) digital acumen, digital literacy and ethics have become more and more important and relevant. In the student survey there were, retrospectively, few direct questions about the training we do in new media technologies – an indicator that the issue is, perhaps, too far off our radar.

Many of the strengths students identified in the program fall under 'genre' or storytelling modes of creativity, whereas a number of the suggestions for improvement involve increasing the diversity of classes offered and focusing more attention to issues related to employability ('more curriculum on how to get into the industry' 'a co-op opportunity') which is, as the alumni comments show, increasingly connected to digital literacy. One alumnus advocated for more of a media-based focus suggesting 'multimedia skills should be frequently integrated with CR[WR] courses to add depth and value to the content of the coursework,' another suggested 'more content on how to market your work online,' another asked for more 'online self-promotion/marketing' information, and another for training on the web, and self-publishing, and publishing house avenues of publication. Drawing more attention to our new media stream, and clarifying what its content should consist of, in a post-pandemic digital world where digital literacy and employment are increasingly entwined, is something the department should look at more closely.

### **2.3. Essential Skill Development**

KPU has a standard for essential skills that each program is expected to address (KPU Policy AC 9) and the Ministry measures 7 skills through graduate assessments. The Creative Writing program fosters the following essential skills in learners:

#### *Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills.*

All Creative Writing classes use these skills in assignments and in-class activities.

#### *Oral Skills*

All Creative Writing classes use these skills in discussions, workshops, student presentations, and student performances.

### *Interpersonal Skills*

All Creative Writing classes use these skills in workshops, group work, pair work, meetings with instructors, and student presentations.

### *Teamwork and Leadership Skills*

All Creative Writing classes use these skills in workshop, group work, pair work, student presentations, and student-lead exercises.

### *Personal Management & Entrepreneurial Skills*

Creative Writing classes teach students how to manage their time through instruction on process, planning, and deadlines, and student-led activities in the classroom.

### *Writing Skills*

All Creative Writing classes develop students' writing skills.

### *Reading and Information Skills*

All Creative Writing classes develop students' reading and information skills through reading and research assignments.

### *Visual Literacy*

Several Creative Writing classes such as CRWR 3400 Special Topics: The Graphic Novel and CRWR 1240: New Forms and Media: Networked Narratives teach visual literacy.

### *Mathematical Skills*

Most Creative Writing classes do not teach mathematical skills though CRWR 3303 The Business of Writing can include grant writing training and modules on financial literacy and budget preparation for writers.

### *Technological Skills*

Several Creative Writing classes teach technological skills, such as CRWR 2140: Writing and Creativity on the Web and CRWR 3140: New Forms and Media: Sites and Platforms.

### *Intercultural Skills*

All Creative Writing classes teach intercultural skills as this is related to one of our Program Learning Outcomes.

### *Citizenship and Global Perspective*

All Creative Writing classes teach these skills as this is related to one of our Program Learning Outcomes.

### *Independent Learning*

All Creative Writing classes foster independent learning through independent writing and research projects.

## **2.4. Curriculum Assessment**

An analysis of the Creative Writing Curriculum Map (please see Appendix D) reveals that our recently rearticulated Program Learning Outcomes are well-matched with the skills that are actually taught in Creative Writing courses at all levels, and that the Creative Writing department has a wide array of courses that cover an impressive range of skills. In particular, Program Learning Outcomes #1-4, which deal primarily with issues of craft in creative writing, are taught in nearly every Creative Writing class. This list of PLOs was created collaboratively by faculty and that is reflected in how widely employed the majority of our PLOs are across genre and year of study. There is also a clear scaffolding of skill levels, from introduced to developing to advanced, which corresponds to the levels of the courses being taught. The 1000-level courses introduce and start to develop particular skills; the 2000-level courses develop them further, the 3000-level courses work both with developing and advanced skills, and the 4000-level courses cover advanced skills. This is consistent throughout the courses taught, and shows a clear progression for the skills taught in Creative Writing department courses.

### *Gap Analysis*

One apparent gap in analyzing the curriculum map is that some of the Program Learning Outcomes could be better represented in some courses. In particular, Program Learning Outcomes #5-8 need to be incorporated into the Course Learning Outcomes of more Creative Writing courses. These Program Learning Outcomes focus on necessary skills such as developing a critical understanding of civic responsibility and socio-cultural issues alongside national, international, and global issues in relation to creative work and representation; considering and applying constructive feedback of one's creative work; and engaging in group work in a constructive and ethical manner. These are essential skills that a Creative Writing graduate should have, and they are skills that are already being taught in our classes at every level, but the Course Learning Outcomes for some courses do not address these skills. The issue here is not that these skills aren't being taught; in most cases they are. The issue is that the written Course Learning Outcomes in the official course outlines need to be updated for some courses to incorporate the work that is already being done, so that all Course Learning Outcomes match the current Program Learning Outcomes.

As to the question of whether faculty are teaching things that aren't relevant to the PLOs, that analysis will best be done in working groups (where faculty who teach the same course meet to discuss key elements of their shared course's curriculum). In the past few years, faculty have moved toward identifying 'modules' that we believe should be taught in some of our core/required courses regardless of who is teaching that course (i.e., a module on creative and cultural appropriation in



CRWR 1200). Our discussions and decisions around these proposed modules have been based on wanting to ensure we can identify *where* some of our core competencies are being introduced, and on ensuring our PLOs are grounded in real classroom learning.

As stated above, the full curriculum map is presented in Appendix D.

### *Recommendations*

- create small working groups composed of those who most often teach a certain course (including new sessionals)
- have the working groups review all course outlines for Creative Writing to assess which PLOs have been integrated into which courses (and how)
- invite sessional faculty to participate in the working groups in relevant classes in order to cross-pollinate pedagogies and strategies
- revise the course outlines

### 3. Program Relevance and Demand

#### 3.1 Relevance and Currency

*Are the program learning outcomes relevant to the current needs of the discipline/sector?*

The Creative Writing program at KPU helps students engage imaginatively with, and think critically about, language, which is a fundamental tool in both a literary artist's practice and in other forms of employment. BC Student Outcomes Data for KPU's CRWR Program (2018-2020) (see Exhibit 1 below, for the full Administrative Data Report please see Appendix E) demonstrates that 100% of respondents were satisfied with their educational training and 100% rated the quality of instruction in the positive range. 93% found the program of study very or somewhat useful in their current occupation. All three categories exceed the Ministry target of greater than 90%. In the Student Survey (please see Appendix F) 55% of our current students said that they strongly agree that our program as a whole is relevant to their creative and career goals, with 32% somewhat agreeing. The responses in the Alumni Survey (please see Appendix G) to the same question mirrored this, with 56% of our alumni strongly agreeing that the curriculum was relevant to their creative and career goals and 31% somewhat agreeing. In terms of overall satisfaction with the program, 52% of our current students are very satisfied, and 35% somewhat satisfied.

**Exhibit 1: KPU Creative Writing Program BC Student Outcomes Data Compared with Ministry Targets**

Measures	BC Student Outcomes Data for KPU Creative Writing Program (2018-20)	Ministry Target
Respondents	18	-
Satisfaction <sup>1</sup>	100%	≥ 90%
Quality <sup>2</sup>	100%	≥ 90%
Usefulness <sup>3</sup>	93%	≥ 90%

*Does the program have the connections to the discipline/sector needed to remain current?*

Again, if we take the traditional writer's trajectory (the creation of creative or literary works and the publication or dissemination of that work by members of the creative or publishing industries) as a goal, our curriculum's emphasis on PLO #1 is successful. 71% of students working in their final years of the degree feel that our program helps them develop their imagination and creative process to a large extent, with 29% stating the program does so to a moderate extent.

Where Creative Writing is also succeeding is in being expansive about what creativity means today, so that a student's trajectory often includes being exposed to, and working in, innovative mediums and contemporary forms, and on themes that are relevant in the culture now. As all of our faculty

<sup>1</sup> Respondents who are "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the education or training they received in their program of study.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents who rate the quality of instruction received from their program of study as "very good", "good" or "adequate".

<sup>3</sup> Respondents who describe their program of study as "very" or "somewhat" useful in their current occupation.

members are working writers, creatives, and academics, students benefit from the faculty's awareness of trends in the publishing, creative, and wellness spheres, and also faculty knowledge on creative and literary opportunities which can help grow students' experiences and CV's. The creative work/life balance has also been a concern in the discipline – both before, but especially after, the disruption and isolation of the pandemic. In light of this, some faculty also incorporate holistic world views and themes of self-care and wellness into their courses which are essential skills not only in the creative sector, but for young people today.

The faculty survey comments reflect the student's satisfaction rates with one faculty member identifying the 'strong foundation in technique and process' that students receive as a strength of the program and another noting that one of our strengths is 'our interdisciplinary approaches to creative process.' However, three specific concerns were raised in the faculty comments: 1) there were plural concerns raised in the faculty survey that the curriculum is still 'completely centred in Western (colonial) practices,' and that concentrated efforts are needed 'to decolonize curricular and pedagogical practices.' 2) It was noted that the curriculum has not shifted enough to professions and practices in the online sphere. 3) As one faculty member noted: 'The ongoing mental health challenges of learners are significant (and foundational in terms of their creative process) but are not addressed in the curriculum in any meaningful way. The term "mental health" appears nowhere in the curriculum.'

The faculty have adopted various techniques to resolve these issues including: inviting visiting writers who are working on contemporary themes and contemporary forms to speak; inviting writers who work in decolonized/decolonizing spheres to speak and work with students; inviting publishers to speak about current trends; introducing more expansive approaches to writing into more 'traditional' CRWR curriculum models (i.e. less 'traditional' approaches to plot, more sensitive approaches to character, culture etc.); teaching more work in translation, or work by previously marginalized voices; and, lastly, working with allies within and without the KPU community to create a contemporary, inclusive, and dynamic culture of exploration, imagination and creative thought within and without the classroom.

#### *Program Advisory Committee*

The Creative Writing department has discussed the idea of establishing a program advisory committee and feels that it is not practical at this point in time due to the small size of our department and the fact that our faculty are all simultaneously professionally active. We feel that finding opportunities for students to work more directly in the industry/sector as undergraduates is a more important first step. Student work and volunteer placements will develop industry connections and may be best first steps toward further considerations of the benefits of a PAC. As our faculty biographies demonstrate, most members of the Creative Writing department do not teach full-time and all work actively in the industry (writing, publishing, producing work, creating collaboratively, working across disciplines in the creative sphere, jurying grants and prizes). These interactions keep faculty current in the industry and sector which benefits our students.

## *Indigenous Content*

The CRWR department is committed to equity in hiring and is currently revising our minimum qualifications to open the door to hiring writing instructors who may have been trained in non-colonial methods and pedagogies including practical experience and community engagement. We have recently hired an Indigenous sessional with specific skills that include traditional writing as well as new media forms and our hope is that we will be able to continue to offer work to this individual based on his eclectic skill set.

The CRWR department is simultaneously committed to supporting the creative aims of our Indigenous students and promoting Indigenous writers and Indigenous ways of knowing through course readings, our visiting writer-in-residence program, our reading series, and community relations. Work by Indigenous authors is being taught widely in our classes, including work by Joseph Dandurand (of the Kwantlen Nation); Eden Robinson; Joy Harjo; Alicia Elliott; Liz Howard, Lee Maracle, Dallas Hunt; Troy Sebastian; Leanne Betasamosake Simpson; Billy Ray Belcourt; Sherman Alexie; Natalie Diaz; Marilyn Dumont, Richard Van Camp, Randy Lundy, Shannon Webb-Campbell, Lesley Belleau, Joseph Kakwinokanasum, Joanne Arnott, Carleigh Baker, and Jordan Abel. The anthology 'Crisp Blue Edges: Indigenous Creative Non-Fiction' has been assigned as a text, and visiting writers and panelists have included: Joseph Dandurand (shortlisted for the 2021 Griffin Poetry Prize and our writer-in-residence for 2 years); Kim Senklip Harvey, Jonina Kirton, Lisa Jackson, and KPU CRWR alumnus Tawahum Bige.

In tandem with our course readings and our visiting writers' program, recent CRWR classes have toured the new ɣʷəχʷéyəm library in Surrey (ɣʷəχʷéyəm means Oral Storytelling in həńqəmińəń, the language of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Tsawwassen, Kwikwetlem, and Musqueam First Nations on whose traditional territories our University is built), been exposed to the two-eyed seeing method<sup>4</sup> in their writing, and sought consultation with KPU's Elder-in-Residence. In 2020 two faculty created The JoAnne Ward Award (named after an Indigenous KPU CRWR student who died of cancer before completing her degree). This award is given annually to an Indigenous writer intending to take a Creative Writing course.

Promoting new opportunities for our students to access and learn from Indigenous writers is a priority. This year a second-year KPU CRWR student was selected to participate in Audible's Indigenous Writers' Circle (undertaking a mentorship with Tanya Talaga) and another third-year student was selected to give a workshop through Massey Books on writing land-based poetry. Tawahum Bige, whose first book is coming out with a lauded Canadian publisher, was a guest speaker in some of our classes, and will be a featured reader at the 2022 Vancouver Writers Festival, in a poetry event sponsored by KPU.

Decolonizing the curriculum is a priority for the department. To make this intention visible the department hired a local Indigenous artist to create a mural on the CRWR office window. Recently KPU posted a call for the university's first Indigenous Writer-in-Residence. (Joseph Dandurand was

---

<sup>4</sup> Etuaptmuk is a guiding principle that comes from the Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall and which involves bringing two divergent perspectives together to gain greater clarity and focus.

CRWR's Writer-in-Residence 7 or so years ago.) As stated previously, increasing the diversity of our faculty is a priority for the department, though the ability to do so is hampered by the fixed number of course offerings we have, which are almost entirely contracted to current regularized faculty.

### **3.2 Faculty Qualifications and Currency**

*What is the collective expertise available to deliver the program?*

#### *FTEs*

There are 4.875 FTE (full-time equivalent) of faculty in the department, one of whom is full-time, five of whom are part-time (50%), and one of whom works at 62.5%. One regular faculty member has recently been seconded to the role of Associate Dean, filling that role *pro tem*. This had led to work for sessional faculty and in the past three terms (Fall 2021 through to, and including, Summer 2022) sessional faculty instructors have taught six classes.

#### *Areas of Expertise*

The broad areas of expertise in the department include the creation and revision of creative writing/creative works, the creative process as practice and theory, creative research techniques, and critical and/or cultural theory as it relates to literary practice.

More specific areas of expertise (for regularized faculty) include a variety of genres, i.e. the writing of fiction, poetry, screen or stage plays, creative nonfiction, and new media works, all of which can be further divided into further specializations such as the short story, novella or novel, historical fiction, young adult fiction, speculative fiction, form poetry, memoir, cultural journalism, hybrid forms and so on. Our Special Topics courses often reflect faculty members' specializations and/or areas of current research which enables us to teach classes on a wide variety of subjects ranging from 'Writing and Science' to 'Writing as Wellbeing' to 'Graphic Narratives' and 'Writing as Witness.' Sessional instructors' unique areas of specialization can, and have, supported the offering of new Special Topics classes as well, such as one on 'Horror' (viewed through a decolonizing lens) and one on 'Myths, Fairytales and Writing the Other.'

#### *Faculty Qualifications*

Collectively our faculty have written or produced over 80 works ranging from novels to memoirs, plays, books of poetry, and sound installations. A significant number of these works have been shortlisted for, or won, prizes including the Governor General's Award, the Gerald Lampert Award, the Pat Lowther Award, the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize, the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, the Audre Lorde Award, the UK New Media Writing Prize, Jessie Theatre Awards, the Stephen Leacock Award, the Leo Award, the Canadian Independent Book Award, the ReLit Prize, the Amazon First Novel Award and the Danuta Gleed Prize. Faculty have also co-authored works, edited anthologies, contributed to anthologies and texts, exhibited work at national museums, worked with international museums, founded and directed an artist-run Arts Centre, had their work adapted into other art forms (film, dance, visual art), developed inner-city and youth-based theatre programs, and published as reviewers.

All of our current regular faculty have Masters degrees (sometimes more than one Masters) in one or more of the following fields: Creative Writing, English, Counselling Psychology, and Writing and Cultural Politics. Two faculty members have PhDs, one in Interdisciplinary Creative Process and one in English Literature.

### *Recent Professional Development*

The department's faculty members are active scholars. Scholarship and professional development in the field might include research, creation, revision, and/or collaboration. Recent scholarly and professional development work by faculty has involved researching material for new creative works, the creation and revision of new works, a Student Research Assistantship which compensated students for work on a faculty-led creative project, and collaborative work with national and international museums, and with Canadian Armed Forces and NATO Forces. This work has sometimes been funded by KPU or by provincial or national arts grants or self-funded. Institutionally, faculty have received numerous O.6 Awards for a one-time course release to work on, or complete, creative projects, as well as funding from the President's Creative Capital Fund, and Educational Leave for both accreditation and creative research. A number of faculty regularly attend and/or give talks at the AWP conferences and/or attend residencies or workshops, sometimes with the support of our Humanities Professional Development Fund and often with the support of public arts funding with grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the B.C. Arts Council. Faculty also regularly apply for grants to serve the students and department, such as the PDEC fund (the President's Diversity and Equity fund) which has supported a number of projects related to diversity and the FAEAF (Faculty of Arts Excellence and Advancement Fund) which have supported a number of projects related to innovative teaching practices, community engagement and cultural diversity.

In terms of professional service/engagement within the larger literary community faculty members have worked with, or are members of, a range of organizations including The Writer's Union of Canada, PEN Canada, the Playwright's Guild of Canada, and The League of Canadian Poets. Faculty have also juried numerous provincial and national grant competitions and awards working with The BC Arts Council and the Canada Council, and on Governor General's Awards juries (in multiple genres), the Roger's Writer's Trust Prize jury, juries for The League of Canadian Poets, as well as jurying provincial awards in BC and in other provinces.

### *Collectively, does the department have the expertise needed to deliver the curriculum?*

The existing faculty has the academic and creative expertise needed to deliver the curriculum. As writers and creative practitioners, the faculty's works, genre skillsets, current research interests, and educational backgrounds are so varied that there are a seemingly limitless number of areas of specialization that could be covered and taught. There has been a case recently where due to a leave we have not had the *variety* of instruction we would have liked in a particular genre stream but we undertook a Search to remedy that.

Where our faculty is currently lacking is in diversity. While we have strong representation from the LGBTQ+ community we currently have no regularized BIPOC faculty. This has been frequently noted

by students and is reflected in the student and alumni survey commentary under suggestions such as ‘Hir[e] more BIPOC writers as profs.’

The faculty survey touched on this issue by calling for more attention to pedagogy in relation to marginalized groups – calling for ‘[m]ore consistency across faculty in terms of intercultural and decolonial competency, and understandings of issues of difference among students.... Some faculty could use more anti-oppression training. Some faculty could teach more BIPOC writers in their course readings.’ The Discipline/Sector Survey noted that ‘[r]espect for and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing; narrative practices outside of the western [sic] traditions and canon; [and] the influence of new media on literary technique as well as on practice an audience reach’ are emerging trends which our students should be prepared for.

The hiring of regularized BIPOC instructors is a goal of the current department and we have recently hired a number of excellent BIPOC sessional writers who bring unique perspectives to the program. However, our course availability and current contract requirements are so closely aligned that there has not yet been opportunity to offer our sessional faculty regular work, although, as noted earlier, recent faculty moves and leaves have created opportunities to offer sessionals some work in both 2021 and 2022, and in the upcoming terms in 2023. One solution to the longer-term issue of faculty course contracts being so closely aligned to courses offered is to grow the program, especially through revisiting the possibility of an *online* Minor stream in Creative Writing. However, as Creative Writing courses are not cost-neutral there may be some hesitancy to assign us more classes despite our fill rates. If the institution allocated three or four more sections to the program annually it would allow us to hire a part-time instructor and give them regular work. We could either add these classes to an online stream (as above) or to the summer session where there is high student demand and Creative Writing courses fill quickly – courses which tend to add to our retention rates. (In the summer CRWR 1100 often attracts 1<sup>st</sup> year students who didn’t take CRWR in the fall or spring when they were sampling other courses or getting their required English classes in, and CRWR 3400 attracts those 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year students who have taken a 1100-level CRWR class in the past but are now pursuing another Major). Whether students from Psychology, History, English or Criminology make CRWR a key part of their education, exposure to smaller class sizes, mentorship models, and craft in language benefits each student who signs up for a CRWR class. We have the training and expertise to make these classes widely applicable to a variety of disciplines and fields, and believe that our courses fill a vital role in supporting learning outcomes across the Arts. More summer classes would benefit our program *and* support the breadth options for other disciplines while also allowing us to increase diversity within our faculty.

### *Recommendations*

- clarify and consolidate the purpose of the New Media stream, hire more qualified faculty who can teach in it, promote the stream through marketing
- finish revising hiring criteria to reflect decolonizing practices across the institution and nation
- revisit the possibility of an online Minor stream in Creative Writing which might support department growth enough to hire another part-time faculty member

- revisit our request for a specific budget for decolonial work and for funding to bring in Indigenous writers and speakers
- discuss how CRWR department can work with, and support, the soon-to-be-appointed Indigenous writer-in-residence

### 3.3 Student Demand

#### *Who takes the program?*

The Creative Writing program has an average annual headcount of 127 students a year. In the last 5 years the lowest headcount was 118 (in 2018/19) and the highest 138 (in 2019/20) which is possibly pandemic influenced, though it's difficult to assess exactly how. (Creative Writing, like most programs, was fully online in 2019/20 which allowed us to offer a large number of asynchronous courses – courses with weekly deadlines done at the student's own pace and in their preferred time slots – which we had not done pre-pandemic, thus enabling students to get course credits without a specific weekly time-slot commitment.)

As the Demographic Profile (please see the Administrative Data Report, Appendix E Exhibit 2) demonstrates, the majority of our students increasingly identify as female (67% in 2019/20 and 72% in 2022/21) with 53% of all students aged 22 or younger. The gender statistic is higher than the Faculty of Arts average (63% female-identified in 2020/21) and the age bracket statistic slightly lower than the Arts average (67% in 2020/21), likely owing to how first-year heavy the CRWR curriculum is (on average CRWR offers 20 first-year course sections annually, 6 second-year courses and 12 third- and fourth-year classes).

The CRWR program has fewer international students than the Faculty of Arts (Creative Writing is currently at 4% to the Arts Faculty's 18%), possibly owing to the higher English language requirements of even an entry-level CRWR class (CRWR 1100's pre-requisites are: one of English Studies 12 (with a B or above), ENGL 1100, ENGQ 1099, ABEE 0091, PSPE 1091 or ENGP 1091, or a Kwantlen English Placement Test placement, or an LPI Essay score of 26). International students keen to take Creative Writing 1100 have sometimes e-mailed the Chair or an instructor and made the case for their English language competency and have, on occasion, been waived in on the basis of a portfolio or other evidence of language proficiency.

While the numbers of international students in Creative Writing is currently low, a number of Creative Writing faculty have guest-lectured in, or taught in the ARTS stream which often has a very high percentage of international students, so the low numbers within the Creative Writing program itself does not mean faculty aren't engaging in, and connecting to, those communities, either through work in the ARTS stream, in the IDEAS stream (where some CRWR faculty also teach) or via the Faculty of Academic and Career Preparation where a faculty member is cross-appointed.

The most notable change in CRWR enrollment demographics is, again, anecdotal as it appears statistics on cultural or racial identity or gender identity are not tracked within the institution.



Faculty with longevity in the department have noted that a greater percentage of our current students are BIPOC students, coming from a variety of cultural backgrounds. If one takes student narratives into account, this is due in part to a broader cultural acceptance of the value of Creative Writing classes (versus, or in tandem with, programs that are perceived as more clearly employment-oriented), but also, possibly, because faculty have sought to foster a classroom culture rooted in awareness, open-mindedness and sensitivity, incorporating ethical approaches to peer workshops, and lectures focused on inclusivity. In 2015 a group of BIPOC Creative Writing students (now called Melanin) was formed and this group has been putting on workshops and meetings for writing students for several years now – focusing on advocacy, ally work, and community development – although during the pandemic the group has been on hiatus. In the spring of 2022, a new Creative Writing major has stepped up to take over the group and has received training and support from the former leader of the group, a KPU alumnus. The new leader will start to hold events for BIPOC students in the fall of 2023 as the on-campus KPU culture becomes more robust.

In the Student Survey when asked ‘What was your main reason for enrolling in the creative writing program?’ 55% of respondents selected ‘to prepare for a specific career or job,’ and 23% selected ‘to improve my job prospects and/or earning potential.’ Other specific answers included ‘to become a better writer,’ ‘to hone my development as a writer,’ and ‘I enjoy creative writing, and I hope to be in the field. I also want to improve my education.’ Word of mouth is also a powerful component of our success. In the photo section at the end of the Self-Study there’s a photo of two of our Creative Writing students: an alumnus and her daughter who took CRWR at her suggestion.

Overall, Creative Writing student demographics tend to be diverse in an exciting and alive way. The use of one’s life and thoughts as material to create imaginative or life-informed works has broad appeal. It isn’t uncommon to find students struggling with personal issues taking creative writing as a way to help process and make something meaningful out of their struggles (whether with mental health or trauma) or mature students seeking to connect to a creative part of themselves they’d pushed aside for too long. As one alumnus noted in the alumni survey: ‘I was also able to pull a lot from my life into my work’. Another alumnus commented that ‘the program... helped me discover the healing power of putting pen to paper and further expanded my genres for reading.’ A mature student in a CRWR 1100 class wrote in their course feedback: ‘...when I cracked a joke about returning to school after 45 years and the whole classroom laughed and applauded me, I was totally blown away. I still speak of that moment and I love how everyone was so accepting of me as an old girl in class. I honestly didn't feel like an old person when I was on campus and I love that.’ In the alumni survey a student commented: ‘small class sizes allowed for familiarity among students that facilitates a strong sense of community which is essential to a safe, healthy and productive creative environment.’ Creative writing classes also tend to appeal to LGBTQ2S+ students or those exploring non-gendered, trans or nonbinary identities and five of our faculty self-identify with this community. Writing is a medium for exploration and students who are forging identities that may not easily align with previous outdated models of identity often enjoy using the art of writing as a medium for self-exploration and self-saying. The department promotes these forms of exploration through scholarships such as the Billeh Nickerson Creative Writing Award (given to an exceptional student working on a project informed by personal experience) and the Bess Coyne Endowed Creative Writing Award for a mature student over 30.

Because the program's fill-rates are generally very high (most classes filling to 100% before the usual attrition once the term starts) with fill-rates consistently in the 90s, i.e. 90% in 2019/20 and 91% in 2020/21, it's difficult to identify how to grow the program or serve new, larger or different demographics without increased course offerings. However, here are two ways the faculty have discussed growth and increased community service in the past:

#### 1) Mature students

The Creative Writing faculty have long thought that serving a greater number of mature students would be an excellent way to grow the program and to contribute to what may be seen as a lack of accessible/craft-based creative writing education in our catchment area. The ability to take an entry-level Creative Writing course without jumping through a ton of admission hoops – i.e. to audit it easily, or the ability to create micro-credentials in Creative Writing, or to offer a kind of continuing studies class – have all been brought up at various times as the department seeks to support lifelong learning. A recent idea to galvanize the institution's new trend toward ensuring a certain percentage of online offerings involved considering the creation of an online minor degree in Creative Writing. The idea was supported informally at both the Dean's level and by Admissions but immediately raised a number of problematic issues in terms of ensuring students taking a minor degree in Creative Writing online would be able to fulfil the BA framework expectations from wherever in the country (or world) they were studying. This would mean ensuring that our ed-plan for the online Minor was supported by *online* quantitative courses, *online* English 1100 and 1200-level courses etc. in order to ensure the students could meet their BA framework needs without taking extra time to progress through the curriculum or having to travel from their home location. Creative Writing would be happy to be a pilot project in this area (we created a curriculum map of what courses we would have to offer online when) but with faculty's current workloads and committee responsibilities it's almost impossible for a faculty member to take on creating the institution's first online minor (or major) degree liaising with other departments and admissions as required.

#### 2) International students

As noted in the 'Cost Structure of Average Class for Creative Writing' section of Appendix E, in the Administrative Data Report, the Creative Writing department does not make money for the institution either through class sizes or international student attendance/tuition. Faculty have previously discussed with the administration the possibility of creating an Introduction to Creative Writing class for international students which would be concept-focused rather than writing-intensive. This would allow us to increase the class size of a first-year course to 35 students who would be learning and practicing creative writing concepts rather than submitting complete short stories or poetry portfolios to faculty for intensive critique and feedback. (In a first year Creative Writing class an instructor may have to mark and comment on 150-200 pages of prose for one short story assignment alone.) There had been some interest from the administration on this – possibly running a test pilot class via the ARTS stream – but the initiative was shelved during the pandemic as we pivoted to teaching fully online.

### *Is demand for the program sustainable?*

Demand for Creative Writing courses over the last five years has been steady with only a percentage change of 1%, mirroring the 1% change in the Faculty of Arts as a whole (see Exhibit 4, Appendix E). Our classes – especially our first-year classes – usually fill as they are a popular elective. Our numbers of declared majors have declined, most sharply in 2020/21 (down to 41 from a peak of 58 in 2016/17) though our declared Minor rate has increased by 71%, up to 29 in 2020/21 from 17 in 2016/17. Our total headcount is currently down 3% which mirrors the 3% reduction in headcounts in other BA CRWR degree programs across the province in 2018/19 including UBC Okanagan, UBC Vancouver, and The University of Victoria (please see Exhibit 6, Appendix E). As with many other programs attempting to review enrollment trends over the last 5 years, it's difficult to know how to put the pandemic, and the shift to online learning it resulted in, in perspective – i.e. if there is a current *reduction* in students, or if we have simply returned to stable enrollment trends after our headcount increased in 2019/20 – possibly due to the accessibility of online and asynchronous classes.

As stated previously Creative Writing usually offers around 20 first-year course sections a year, approximately 6 second-year courses, and 12 third- and fourth-year courses. We have a 2 year ed-plan that allows us to focus on different genre streams every other year, though we tend to offer the fiction stream (which is popular with students) annually. This first-year heavy model is necessary as it takes approximately 20 first year courses to fill 5 or 6 second-year courses and so on. By third- and fourth-year most of our students are taking multiple CRWR classes to fulfill the requirements of their minor or major, though we also see a number of students who liked CRWR 1100 return for a third-year class, taking it as a breadth class while pursuing other majors such as History, Criminology, Philosophy, or Psychology. These students bring diverse perspectives to the third-year classroom and, as notes earlier, tend to register in our classes in greater numbers in the summer term when other departments offer fewer classes and we usually run a 3400 Special Topics class that might seem to intersect better with their main field of study than a stricter genre class (i.e. 'Writing as Witness,' or a class on 'Innovative and Creative Research Techniques').

This model is currently sustainable from both the faculty and student perspective in the sense that the number of classes we offer matches faculty contracts with a buffer of one unassigned class – which we can reschedule or drop if registration is low. Student needs are usually met in terms of courses needed or wanted and guided studies are rare as the ed-plan generally works. Our department is also flexible in terms of teaching skills (faculty often have a broad range of courses they can teach) and course offerings: our scheduling committee diligently tracks enrollment during registration, sometimes cancelling a course with low registration numbers and replacing it with unmet demand courses as needed. (Staying in dialogue with enrolled students is key here and this is done by both the DA and the faculty member of the affected course.)

### *Financial considerations*

As Exhibit 9, Appendix E 'Cost Structure of Average Class for Creative Writing' shows the department is not fiscally profitable. This is due to our writing-intensive small class sizes and lower rate of international students. That said, our program is very efficient, with low- to no- equipment costs or

needs and, as online learning maintains its popularity, lower classroom needs/campus space overhead. The majority of our faculty share one office which doubles as a space to meet students, showcase faculty books and students' chapbooks, and host a small lending library of literary magazines. We believe that Creative Writing classes support learners in programs that may be more fiscally profitable by offering these students a unique mode of learning: in Creative Writing they get to experience a smaller class size, receive individual feedback and attention on their original work, and experience mentorship in craft. These factors were noted in the student and alumni surveys under the program's strengths: 'Smaller classes that lead to discussion,' 'The small class sizes,' 'The teachers are all wonderful and provide a lot of resources for students, lots of care and time spent one on one,' and 'I appreciate the more care oriented instructions where teachers value and take in students['] needs, provide one-on-one time for further workshop and career advice.'

As stated earlier, Creative Writing is looking for ways to grow the program and these include ways mindful of the fiscal ambitions of the institution such as developing and delivering non-writing-intensive (but still writing-based) Creative Writing courses for international students, and trying to find ways to serve mature and professional students in the catchment who are seeking to develop their writing skills without necessarily committing to a full BA degree program. A number of our faculty have, and do, work with individuals living on the perceived margins – refugees, prisoners, individuals struggling with addiction or mental health issues, people living at, or below, the poverty line, youth in care. And while fiscal considerations matter, we also believe that artful and creative explorations of the self through language can benefit many members of society which ultimately benefits us all.

*Does the program have the capacity to meet demand?*

The program currently has seat capacity and instructional capacity to meet demand for the program, however (as stated previously) the faculty is currently lacking a regularized faculty member from the BIPOC community and this lack is felt by both the writing students and the current regularized faculty. When a faculty member is on leave for any reason, or seconded to other roles, or takes on other classes in other departments, this creates an opportunity for sessional instructors to take on work, but until this year (2021/22) those opportunities have been almost nonexistent.

The program has the physical capacity to run its classes, though for a long time Creative Writing has wanted a 'homebase' classroom in the hopes that it might more readily reflect Creative Writing contexts, i.e. through the ability to maintain alternate desk and seat structures, retain a computer in the classroom, and possibly house books or other literary magazines in the classroom for students. New Media classes are sometimes run online and sometimes in the Journalism lab space. These needs are currently met.

*Does the program have effective outreach to ensure demand?*

Time and attention spent in the consideration of language, critical thought and craft are highly beneficial to a cross-section of people. In this way the department aspires to be of use to a wide variety of learners, and to possibly grow, and outreach is an important part of that. Because our first-year classes have an especially strong reputation amongst the broader student population (peer recommendations are frequently cited as motivators for taking CRWR 1100) well over half of

our course offerings are first year/introductory classes. As a popular elective for students in a broad range of disciplines (from math to accounting to nursing and business) our introductory classes are intended to serve both those students who wish to pursue other programs but want to engage more creatively with language in their foundational years of study *and* dedicated/future writers and creatives. Most of our students didn't come to KPU to take Creative Writing, and many of our majors didn't take Creative Writing 1100 intending to major in the program – only discovering as they continued in the program that writing was their vocation. Identifying ways to recruit potential writing majors to KPU would allow the program to grow and would enculture a stronger sense of creative purpose in the students from early on in their course of study. When asked in the student survey '[w]ere you involved in volunteering at writing organizations during your studies?' only 38% said yes and 63% said no. It seems that a similar minority end up participating in Creative Writing groups such as the Creative Writing Guild, Melanin, or the Kwantlen Poetry Project, or working on the board of *pulp* magazine. Having more dedicated Creative Writing students from year one might help grow these vital learner-centred community groups.

In terms of outreach across institutions, various initiatives have been undertaken to assist in offering placements to writing-focused undergraduates. This includes agreements with Douglas College and the Vancouver Film School and outreach with the Langley Fine Arts Secondary School. In terms of community outreach, faculty do public readings and public service engagements in our catchment areas (attending recruitment days to represent the program, acting as a keynote speaker at the Youth Writing Contest award ceremony at the Surrey Public Library, serving on juries or committees in the catchment) but, as of this self-study, the department has yet to see (at least anecdotally) a significant proportion of our program's students enrolling at KPU *in order to* take Creative Writing.

Becoming more of a destination for dedicated writers requires promotion of the program and the faculty as active writers. KPU and Creative Writing faculty members *have* promoted the program in many ways – through sponsoring youth writing competitions in the catchment, advertising the writing program in literary markets, sponsoring high-profile literary events such as the Poetry Bash at the Vancouver Writer's Festival (hosted in 2019, 2020 and 2021 by faculty and, in 2021, featuring an alumnus), a Spoken Word event at VWF 2022, and Spoken Word Night at the Growing Room Literary Festival, developing and maintaining ties with the Langley Fine Arts School writers, and participating in local reading series (the Surrey Muse series as well as, On Edge, Dead Poet's, and Pandora's Collective) and regularly attending 'Strangers on a Train,' hosted by Langara College which features a faculty member and a student from a variety of writing programs in the lower mainland, among others. KPU also initiated a 'KPU Reads' program that showcased work by CRWR faculty and/or which involved faculty in the promotions for other books chosen (see the photo of Anosh Irani being interviewed about his KPU reads book 'The Parcel' in the photo sheet at the end of the study).

This year KPU is sponsoring a spoken word poetry event at the Vancouver Writer's Festival in which a recent alumna whose first book is out now with a prestigious press will read. The Creative Writing department is working with Marketing to make high-schools in our catchment area aware of this event (a daytime event aimed at youth) even offering to have a KPU faculty member join an 'attending' class by Zoom afterward to talk about writing and do some writing exercises with the class. These efforts require significant time and energy, however, and fall far short of a

comprehensive Marketing plan with clear and progressive steps intended to promote and support growth in the program.

### *Recommendations*

- develop a marketing plan to promote the Creative Writing program to high school writers in our catchment areas
- develop a clear set of Admission guidelines (a 1-pager) for mature student applicants or aspiring writers wanting to take a Creative Writing class at KPU
- expand our department's presence on social media, especially Twitter and, if deemed appropriate, Tik Tok. In 2022 we had a student volunteer who worked in a bookstore do guest posts for their peers recommending books, this helps build community and also students' CV's
- create a clearer 4-year pathway model for students (via graphics or a video) so that the idea of what a Creative Writing degree entails becomes more easily conceptual
- offer and promote Advising hours bi-weekly where the Chair is available to answer prospective or current CRWR student's questions and post our intended classes for the year so students can plan their schedule more independently

## 4. Effectiveness of Instructional Delivery

### 4.1 Instructional Design and Delivery of Curriculum

*Are appropriate opportunities provided to help students acquire the PLOs?*

The Creative Writing faculty collectively refined and revised our 2012 PLOs in the summer of 2021 at the start of the Curriculum Review process. We had too many PLOs in 2012 and also wanted to make sure the PLOs we undertook the review with reflected the faculty's current pedagogies, an awareness of the problematical colonial structures in academia, and trends in our creative communities and arts-industries. In the student survey the majority of our 2021 PLOs were rated highly in terms of helping students develop their skills – with each PLO coming in at over 80% in the helping to a large or moderate extent categories (Q9, Appendix F) though two PLOs show enough response variation to deserve further consideration.

PLO #2 'Demonstrate a solid grounding in critical thinking skills and research methods in relation to creative work' had 42% of all students agreeing this PLO was met to a large extent, 38% to a moderate extent, and 21% responding to a small extent. In terms of PLO #2 some steps have already been taken to increase research skills in the program, including offering a 3400 Summer 2021 class on Innovative and Creative Research Techniques in Creative Writing which a number of the summer students suggested should be a regular offering. Many other classes, such as CRWR 1200 and CRWR 4150: The Writers' Studio (both required courses for the Major) also include research as part of the course requirements. The critical thinking skills aspect needs to be addressed by the department as a whole. The faculty survey (Q6, Appendix I) also identifies PLO #2 as an area for consideration, with only 33% of the faculty feeling the curriculum achieves this learning outcome to a large extent, 50% suggesting to a moderate extent, and 17% not at all. An analysis of PLO #2 on a per-course basis suggests *some* of the discrepancy may be genre-based as the screenwriting and creative nonfiction stream (only introduced at the 3<sup>rd</sup> year-level and then likely very craft and form focused) have fewer of these PLOs forward-focused than some of the other genres and forms which are introduced earlier.

PLO #5, 'Communicate a critical understanding of civic responsibility and sociocultural issues alongside national, international, and global issues in relation to creative work and representation' similarly had a span of responses with 50% of students saying the program did this successfully to a large extent, 38% to a moderate extent, 8% to a small extent, and 4% not at all. This PLO is arguably the most contemporary / freshly re-articulated PLO (when juxtaposed to our original PLOs), and so may have varied responses in part because this work is likely being done by different faculty members to different degrees (as discussed elsewhere in the Self-Study) and may be more readily incorporated into some classes than into others, though it is certainly an area the faculty needs to address.

Our alumni survey reflects the overall response pattern to these questions with each PLO coming in at over 80% in the helping to a large or moderate extent categories (please see Q10, Appendix G) except for PLOs #2, 3 and 5. PLOs #2 and 5 have been identified as areas for improvement as above. Here, PLO #3, 'Identify the literary and/or cultural lineage one is working in and the associated

literary principles and techniques,' had 43% of alumni say their courses did this to a large extent, 29% to a moderate extent, 21% to a small extent, and 14% not at all. This also bears consideration.

Interestingly, the industry survey (Q6, Appendix H) identifies PLOs #3 and 5 as *less essential* skills than the other PLOs with only 17% believing PLO #3 'Identify the literary and/or cultural lineage one is working in and the associated literary principles and techniques,' and PLO #5 'Communicate critical understanding of civic responsibility and sociocultural issues alongside national, international, and global issues in relation to creative work and representation' are essential skills (though still important), whereas PLO #2 'Demonstrate a solid grounding in critical thinking skills and research methods in relation to creative work' is considered essential by 67% of our industry / discipline respondents.

*Are appropriate experiential learning opportunities provided to help students acquire the learning outcomes?*

The Creative Writing classroom is already an experiential place in the sense that what many students focus on in their writing is a blend of real-world experience, imaginative work, and craft. That said, the faculty understand the value of physically getting students out of the classroom and into new and dynamic environments. When asked 'To what extent do you agree that you have sufficient opportunities in the program to reinforce your learning through practical application of this learning' 42% of our students strongly agreed that they had sufficient opportunities, 25% somewhat agreed, 17% neither agreed or disagreed, 8% somewhat disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed. Of those students 38% have volunteered at a writing organization during their studies and 63% have not.

At present there are a number of experiential learning opportunities that students can undertake. The longest running of these involves volunteering for Creative Writing groups active on campus. This might involve being a member or leader in the Creative Writing Student Guild (funded by the Student Society and therefore run independently from the faculty though we provide a faculty liaison), joining Melanin, getting involved with the Kwantlen Poetry Project (student-run), or participating in the running and production of *pulp* magazine<sup>5</sup> our student-run writing/fine arts magazine funded by PiPs (Polytechnic Ink Publishing Society) which offers students a chance to work as assistant or main genres editors, production or digital support staff. *pulp* also provides our writers

---

<sup>5</sup> From their website <https://www.pulpmag.ca/about/>: *pulp* MAG acknowledges our work is conducted on unceded ancestral lands of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Semiahmoo, Tsawwassen, Qayqayt and Kwikwetlem peoples. Unceded means this land was never relinquished for use by its peoples; peoples who have yet to receive justice or reparation for their loss of land rights, fishing rights, and homelands.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) takes its name from the Kwantlen First Nation. We at *pulp* MAG support the efforts of Indigenous voices and encourage our readers and community to explore all the ways to further support decolonization.

*pulp* MAG is Kwantlen Polytechnic University's literature and visual arts magazine. Made by students, the magazine acts as a touchstone for emerging writers and artists from Kwantlen and the surrounding area.

*pulp* MAG aims to be a safe, inclusive space for emerging KPU artists of all types. We want to give a platform to unique voices with important stories to tell, no matter the medium. We believe in the importance of artist recognition, exposure, paying our creative talent, and in building a strong community to hold the work. We promise to treat your work gently.

At *pulp* MAG, we especially appreciate the avant-garde; we are ready to push the boundaries of art with you.



with a magazine they can submit to, thereby gaining submission and publication experience. All of these groups are supported by the faculty through event promotion and/or consultation.

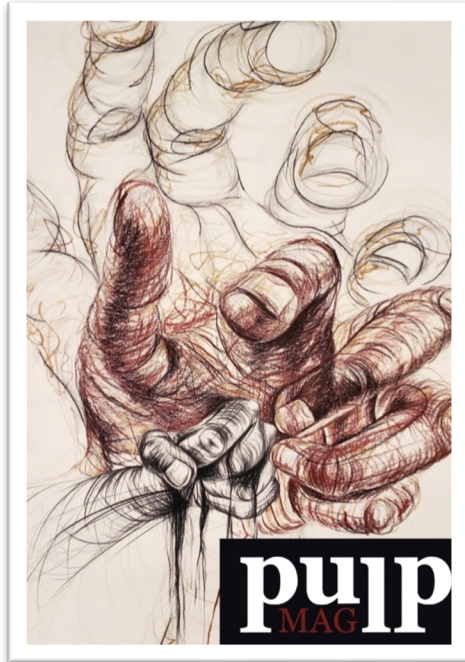


Fig 1. An issue of pulp

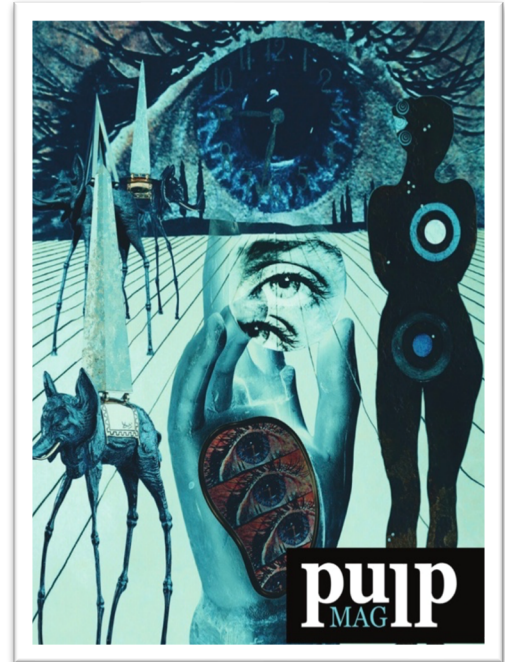


Fig. 2 An issue of pulp

Experiential opportunities offered within particular courses or by the program or institution include, but are not limited to the following examples:

- attending readings, having meetings and/or mentorship sessions with visiting writers
- course-related fields trips to local parks or other settings within the catchment
- opportunities to participate in field schools
- opportunities to participate in the Inside-Out Prison Exchange course taught by a faculty member (this is an ongoing opportunity, the first year it was offered three fourth-year creative writing students participated and were able to learn alongside incarcerated individuals at a minimum-security Indigenous Healing Village, in a peer-to-peer model of exchange in the creative modalities of drama and creative writing)
- class visits (made by a number of faculty / different classes) to the Surrey Art Gallery (often working on ekphrasis-related projects)
- opportunities for fourth-year students to work as volunteer teaching assistants in first year classes (usually driven by student requests if they are applying for a graduate program in Education)

- class visits to the Vancouver International Writers Festival (i.e. to a panel on Indigenous graphic narratives for a Special Topics class, and to a panel on non-fiction for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year creative nonfiction class where one of the panelists met with KPU students after)
- a class visit to the Vancouver Art Gallery to see new media-related works
- class visits to the Surrey Archives and to KPU's Archive collection
- student research assistant positions (one as an 'artist assistant' on a major project, and one as a 'teaching assistant' organizing course experiential activities)
- volunteer work at festivals (including the Vancouver Writers Festival, Room Magazine's Growing Room Festival, and Word) and/or supporting literary causes, i.e. volunteering at PEN's information table or literary magazine tables (at the AWP and at Word) with a faculty member
- volunteer work as first readers or editorial board members at a publishing house or literary magazine (based on faculty recommendation)



Fig. 3 A CRWR class working on a writing/response exercise at the Surrey Art Gallery after a talk by the Assistant Curator



Fig. 4 CRWR students engage with visiting author Kevin Spent's performative reading.

In the student survey, students expressed a particular interest in seeing an increase in mentorship, with 81% believing this would be beneficial to them. 67% of students would like to see some form of an internship occur, and 52% would like to see work-integrated course projects that involve practical applications relevant to the industry or community partners. The alumni survey further identified modes of professional development that they feel would be beneficial for the program with the highest positive response falling under the mentorship category at 93% recommended, followed by 60% recommending work-integrated course projects where students reinforce their learning through a practical application relevant to industry or community partners, and 47% recommending internships.

One of the most noticeable areas for improvement suggested by the surveys collectively involves the issue of creating and possibly regularizing or standardizing opportunities for our students to gain practical work experience in the industry. Student alumni comments reflect this. As one alumnus noted: 'I think the reality of the post-secondary experience needs to be stated more explicitly. Not to discourage students but to help them understand this isn't a degree you walk out with and straight into a career. Not everyone can get published, it is a long and difficult road that can be mentally, emotionally and spiritually taxing. Knowing more about what other opportunities there are as you make your way towards your writing goals and how those temporary careers in the literary world can help sustain you in the meantime could be emphasized more.' This is a nuanced comment that is supported to varying degrees by other comments including the alumnus comment which notes 'the program generally relied on peer feedback too heavily for my liking,' or the suggestion to 'encourage students to read publicly and/or have students provide those opportunities,' both of which might be inferred to be asking for more professional development experience. (A few years ago, we started faculty readings that featured faculty reading from new books/works with one or two students reading before the faculty read. Members of the broader

KPU community – Deans, Associate Deans, library staff and support staff have frequently attended these events.)

Student comments also reflected a desire on the students' part to have more than one class in relation to professional development skills and opportunities as evidenced by comments requesting '[m]ore curriculum on how to get into the industry,' 'co-op opportunity to help us get into jobs after graduation as well as give us the experience needed,' and suggestions that the program could 'further prepare [us] for jobs we are able to apply our skills to,' alongside more emphasis on components that assist students 'to work toward job prospects after graduation.' Under what skills or topics are missing from the program, current students suggested editing, how to get into the industry, courses on networking and ways to find jobs, how to run a creative business, or working for oneself as a creative person.

Comments around our current professional development course, CRWR 3303 the Business of Writing were raised with one student noting that the course sometimes focuses on writing as a profession while at other times it focuses on writing alongside profession: 'These are critically different approaches to writing in one's life, but the program description [of the course] does not encapsulate this difference. Given the breadth and depth of creative writing I don't believe stricter adherence to a program description or outline is beneficial.... Rather, it would be better simply to have the professors inform us of those kinds of differences.' Going forward it's possible we may need to work with calendar descriptions to accurately reflect a particular instructor's emphasis. In terms of the Business of Writing we may eventually decide to offer a second Business of Writing style-course to ensure our graduates are both prepared for the industry (understanding the nuts and bolts of grant writing for example) alongside learning and practicing those aspects of self-care that are essential for writers. In the meantime, we have been working with our already popular Special Topics classes to cover gaps in training around professional development, and gaps in mental health awareness.

In 2022 we had our first CRWR student work as a Student Learning Assistant, assisting a faculty member in organizing experiential learning events and exercises for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year CRWR class. The SLA program began as a Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund project, launching in January, 2021. Since that time, it has been awarded a Ministry of Advanced Education and Training grant to expand and continue. Going forward, the anticipation is that it will be funded through the Office of the Provost. This summer our CRWR student was paid for work that supported a summer course's experiential activities, undertaking a number of conceptual and organizational tasks which included liaising and communicating with her instructor, working and networking with industry professionals (archivists, curators, professional staff), working with KPU's Indigenous Services office and the office of the Elder, supporting fellow classmates, and creating and delivering relevant academic modules and writing exercises for the class. The student showed excellent initiative, and that student's role was so inspirational to other students that 3 more CRWR students have applied to be SLAs this year.

Discussions amongst Chairs and within the Scheduling Committee after reading the Self-Study surveys has already led to a rethinking of some of the kinds of Special Topics that we might offer, which led to the offering of the Research Skills class in the summer of 2021, a Writing and Performance class which will be offered in the fall of 2022, and a planned course in the summer of

2022 on either teaching creative writing or on editing. One of the main areas for faculty discussion and action is in the area of professional development. While listing the kinds of experiential learning that we have done demonstrates the wealth and variety of experiences on offer to our students, all of the above are faculty-led and are not part of any standardized course offering. Of special interest here is the opportunity to formally create internship opportunities or short-term annual positions with industry partners (as one industry partner noted ‘KPU undergraduate students could volunteer to be first readers for EVENT magazine,’ another recommended having students do manuscript reading and reports). In the past those opportunities have also been faculty-driven: Instructor A asks Publisher Y to take on a student to read the slush pile, Instructor B recommends Student X for a first reader position on a magazine where the faculty member is on the editorial board. Creating a class or cohort that focuses on professional development experience seems like a clearer, more cogent and more egalitarian way to provide our learners with work experience. (It should be noted here that faculty investigated the possibility of a co-op class as early as a decade ago but the conversations were not fruitful as Creative Writing does not have a large enough cohort in the upper levels to create a co-op class.)

#### Recommendations:

- begin robust faculty discussions on the issue of professional development
- create (and possibly formalize / regularize) opportunities for students to experience professional development through specific courses (existing or new) and/or workshops
- include professional development in the revision of the reading series model (might we have visiting publishers as well as readers)
- utilize the new Student Assistant Program and the recent Research Credit courses as opportunities for upper-level students to gain CV-supporting experience
- consider adding a professional development mentorship component to the capstone 4150 and 4250 courses

#### *Are appropriate opportunities provided to help students acquire the essential skills?*

The student outcomes essential skills data for KPU’s Creative Writing program (see Exhibit 11, Appendix E) shows that 98% of students surveyed believe that they are given essential skills training in our program. This is well above the Ministry target of 85%. The student survey (Q10, Appendix F) demonstrates that many of the essential skills the program focusses on are successfully delivered to a large or a moderate extent. The only area where the majority of students and alumni believed skill training was lacking was in numeracy skills (42% of our current students believed this learning was only delivered to a small extent and 38% not at all) – perhaps reasonable in a Creative Writing curriculum, though certainly present in grant writing and budgeting modules. Areas where improvement may be required include *problem resolution* with 21% of our current students saying they learned this to a small extent and 8% saying not at all, *leadership skills* with 29% of students saying they learned it to a small extent and 8% saying not at all (similar to the alumni response where 27% of alumni said they learned *leadership skills* to a small extent and 13% not at all) and

*intercultural skills* with 29% of students – and 36% of alumni – saying they learned it to a small extent and 4% of students saying not at all.

Leadership skills might easily be considered in the professional development conversations the faculty will begin after the program review, but the intercultural skills statistic is noteworthy given the extent to which our student population comes from a diversity of backgrounds and cultures and the extent to which the reading and writing material in many courses is culturally diverse. This may point to the fact that foregrounding diversity of culture and perspective may not be the same as teaching intercultural relations as a skill. Many faculty are already aware of the problematic nature of the workshop and peer review models in relation to intercultural dynamics so this is an area for discussion after the review.

*Does the program design ensure students are prepared for subsequent courses?*

The student survey responses to questions of progression and prerequisite offerings (Q14, Appendix F) points to an area where we could improve. While positive response rates are over 50% (74% strongly or somewhat agree that the prerequisites prepare students for more advanced courses, and 56% strongly or somewhat agree that they are able to take the prerequisite courses when they are needed), 35% either somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that they are able to take the prerequisite courses when needed, and only 35% strongly or somewhat agree that the range of courses offered each term is adequate with the majority either strongly disagreeing that the range of courses offered each term is adequate (30%) or somewhat disagreeing (30%). The alumni survey (Q15, Appendix G) largely supports these responses in terms of demonstrating a much higher satisfaction with prerequisite preparedness (73% strongly or somewhat agreeing that the prerequisites prepared them for more advanced courses) and course availability (80% somewhat or strongly agreeing that prerequisite courses were available when needed) than with the range of courses offered each term (40% dissatisfied). Faculty responses (Q8, Appendix I) were also varied, with only 17% strongly agreeing that the prerequisites offered prepare students for more advanced courses, 50% somewhat agreeing, 17% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 17% strongly disagreeing.

#### Recommendations

- clarify if student dissatisfaction is based on desired or required courses and, if possible, what courses in particular
- have a fulsome faculty discussion to identify perceptions and issues around current modes of laddering and/or the effects of de-laddering courses in our last curriculum revision
- perform an analysis/multiple student case-study of the two-year ed-plan to see how the ed-plan's genre switching (some genres are only taught every other year due to our limited number of course offerings) is affecting students wanting to progress through the program with a focus on a genre taught less often (screenwriting and poetry primarily)

- review the balance of courses offered across terms (presently approx. 17 or 18 in the Fall, 17 or 18 in Spring and 3 in Summer, for a total of 38) to see if adding more courses in the summer would help with flow through the program
- as previously stated, post the planned courses for the whole year on the website (as a draft) so students can plan accordingly
- offer Advising hours with a faculty member before registration so the faculty Advisor can review student MAPs with them and recommend pathways to support the student's genre interests, encourage a variety of instruction, and tailor progression toward educational and creative aims. (For example, the current acting Advisor was able to let students know what 3400 classes would likely be offered over the course of the whole 2022/2023 ed-plan so students would know when and which course to take based on their graduation plan and interests)

*Does instruction meet the needs of diverse learners?*

Modes of instruction vary across classes and across genre and in accordance with faculty pedagogies. Students who commit to the program appreciate the small class sizes, the strong peer relationships and the focus on mentoring. These students benefit from a variety of educational modalities throughout their degree including, but not limited to: lectures, workshops, experiential learning activities, seminars, immersive writing experiences, individual and group presentations, and individual and collaborative project creation. In the student survey (Q15, Appendix F) 91% of students responded positively to the question of whether or not instructors accommodate their individual learning needs: 61 % strongly agreed and 30% somewhat agreed. One of the alumnus comments in relation to how instruction is delivered across the program noted 'The teachers aren't just focused on the specifics of how the course will help the students; they can find an individual's weaker skills and help build them,' another praised '[t]he instructors' compassion and dedication to excellence. Overall, I recognized a true desire to help students succeed.' A third noted that the small class sizes allowed for familiarity which led to community and growth, adding that 'having office hours where our instructors were available to us was also essential to the personal learning journey.' The correlation between smaller class sizes and individual mentorship and diverse learning needs being met should not be overlooked. Students coming into Creative Writing with some form of accommodation are treated respectfully and faculty work to ensure those accommodation needs are met and that the students' particular needs (mental, physical, or in combination) are taken seriously. Faculty members are aware of, and do use, the Early Alert program so that students who begin to falter in their studies for any reason can be supported by Counselling Services or other student service programs as needed.

Faculty also recognize the benefits of diversity in the classroom. This year one of our graduates (who identifies as neurodiverse) was nominated by faculty to give the convocation address on behalf of the 2022 graduates. An activist and strong ally in the classroom, he was selected by the Dean's office to speak, and integrated urgent themes into his address including the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and Indigenous-led land protection efforts – themes he'd been working on his writing. He noted: 'One of the many things I learned at KPU, especially over the course of the

pandemic, is how important community is. How much I value being in a space with other people. I really took the space for granted until it had to be given up. But I did still have the people. Part of what helped me get me through the pandemic was the relationships I already had with some of my teachers and peers.’ This student will be attending UBC as a graduate student undertaking a Masters in Library and Information Sciences.

*Do the assessment methods allow students to demonstrate to what extent they have achieved the learning outcomes?*

Methods of assessment in Creative Writing predominantly include the assessment of original creative work(s) and the assessment of creative revisions, but can, and do sometimes also include, literary reading reports, essays or papers on creative writing-related topics, presentations (group or individual), seminar contributions, quizzes or tests, and, on rare occasions, a midterm or final. Active participation is a consistent assessment method/component across all, or most, classes. This variety of assessment methods is a reflection of both the unique demands of different courses (in terms of content/material and forms of practice), but also instructors’ individual pedagogies. Regardless, all assessment methods work to ensure that students can demonstrate their growth over the course, and their achievement of the learning outcomes.

95% of all students surveyed (Q 19, Appendix F) agreed that they ‘receive clear information on how I will be evaluated’ and 87% agree that the range of assessments lets them demonstrate what they have learned. 73% agree that the assessment standards are consistent throughout the program and 95% agree that the instructors provide useful feedback. This is high praise for a program with such a variety of learning outcomes (in the sense that each ‘new’ genre may require assessments based on a new skill i.e. dialogue in Screenwriting versus figurative language in poetry) and with such a range of assessment methods and pedagogical approaches amongst faculty. The alumni responses were similarly favourable (Q 19, Appendix G) with 85% agreeing that they received clear information on how their work would be evaluated, and 100% saying that their evaluations led to an improvement in their work and increased their learning. 71% felt the assessment standards were consistent through the program (14% neutral) and 93% said the instructors provided useful feedback (100% said that the feedback was detailed).

The student and alumni feedback does not align with the faculty survey responses around assessment. 0% of the faculty strongly agreed that assessment standards were consistent throughout the program with 50% somewhat agreeing, and 17% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, 17% somewhat disagreeing and 17% strongly disagreeing. Multiple perspectives were found across almost all categories in relation to assessment though faculty seem to agree that the range of assessments let students demonstrate what they have learned (67% in agreement). Ultimately, this commentary may have more to do with grading than with modes or forms of actual assessment though discussion on this is warranted. Grading is a topic that has been flagged for the department before, both in terms of a perceived inconsistency amongst faculty around what level of creativity, revision and polish is equitable to what grade, and also around the possibility that some instructors grade more strictly or leniently than others. This query has led to some ‘blind’ grading roundtables (where faculty members are presented with anonymous student assignment – one in prose and one poetry – along with the year of the student in question and asked to assign a grade). These



roundtables have demonstrated that on the whole the assignment of grades is not that diverse. Creative Writing also has its own grade band which explains the literary/creative criteria for each grade band and this rubric is expected to be used by all faculty.

#### Recommendations

- present the students' with the learning outcomes for each course in the course outline in tandem with the assessment methods
- continue grading roundtables, once or twice every semester
- undertake an analysis of grade averages across courses and genre to ensure students aren't entering a class or genre stream where the overall expectations are higher than in other classes/genre streams

## 4.2 Student Success

### *Are students performing satisfactorily in courses?*

A satisfactory grade is defined as a C or above. Exhibits 12 and 13 from the Administrative Data Report (Appendix E) illustrate the grade distribution of Creative Writing students and Faculty of Arts students respectively. On average over the last five years 87% of Creative Writing students have achieved a grade of C or higher. Arts students receive a grade of C or higher 79% of the time. This discrepancy may be related to our primary mode of assessment which is creative work (often submitted in an original draft form and then revised for grading after peer-feedback, and mentorship/editing from the course instructor). Creative Writing faculty also encourage students to get one-to-one feedback from instructors in office hours often resulting in significant improvements in the work submitted for grading. Creative Writing's failure rate between 2016/17 and 2020/21 either matches, or is close to, the Faculty of Arts failure rate averages. Repeat rates in Creative Writing (see Exhibit 15) are also close to the repeat rates in the Faculty of Arts (exactly the same in both 17/18 and 19/20, and varying only by 1 or 2% in the other years). DFW rates (the rate for the students who receive a grade of D, F or who Withdraw from the course; Exhibit 16) have traditionally been lower in Creative Writing than the Faculty of Arts (by as much as 8%), though in 20/21 the rates were more closely aligned possibly indicating that drop rates likely had more to do with larger pandemic-related issues (including online learning dynamics) and less to do with particular courses. Because Creative Writing classes tend to be smaller than other Arts classes, and because the learning doesn't tend to be text-book based but more intrinsically connected to attendance, discussion and participation, Creative Writing faculty tend to be very aware of students who miss a class, or fall behind, and often work diligently – sometimes in tandem with the Early Alert system – to ensure students can finish a class successfully if possible.

### *Are students making satisfactory progress in the program?*

One of the factors that informs the measure of progress for a student at KPU is the amount of time it takes to complete a program. Exhibit 18 from the Administrative Data Report demonstrates that

completion time over the last four years for Creative Writing has been between 4.7 years (in 2017/18 when we graduated 9 students) and 7.8 years (2018/19 when we only graduated 2 students). In the years when we've graduated over 10 students in the BA (12 in 2016/17, 14 in 2019/20 and 11 in 2020/21) the completion rates have been 5.5 years, 5.8 and 5.5. respectively. The Faculty of Arts completion rate average for the same stretch of years is between 5.3 and 5.6.

One reason for the slower progression of our graduates in terms of their BA completion may be the number of students who don't decide to major in Creative Writing from their first semester and who therefore end up having to 'go back' and take more classes to fulfill the degree requirements. Further analysis of this hypothesis is warranted.

As noted previously, some students have expressed dissatisfaction with the number of course offerings or the availability of courses they would like. This supports previous recommendations to clarify if student dissatisfaction is based on desired or required courses, as well as recommendations to perform an analysis/multiple student case study of the two-year ed-plan to see how the ed-plan affects student progression through the program, and reviewing the balance of courses offered across terms to see if adding more courses in the summer would help with flow through the program.

#### *Are graduates of the program successful?*

There are many markers for success for aspiring writers. These marks of success can begin during, or after, undergraduate study, with successfully publishing a work or works in a literary magazine, though performing one's work for an audience, creating and offering workshops or curating writing events, and/or participating in writing community events and programming. Success can also include using a degree in Creative Writing to springboard oneself into a Master's-level degree or into a form of gainful employment that supports one's writing ambitions. Many of KPU's Creative Writing students have achieved a form of that kind of success, whether publishing books, publishing in literary magazines, being shortlisted for, or winning, writing contests, going on to MFA degrees or onto MLS, MEd or MA degrees. A former student recently published her first book of poetry (well-reviewed and with an excellent press) ten years after taking CRWR classes at KPU – doing so after starting and raising a family, and after returning to creative writing classes through work with SFU's The Writer's Studio (including working with one of her former KPU CRWR instructors).

In the alumni survey (Q20) 71% of alumni said they were very satisfied with their learning journey in the KPU Creative Writing program and 14% said they were somewhat satisfied. Of those respondents 33% pursued further education after completing the Creative Writing program and 67% did not. Since finishing their Creative Writing degree, of those who have gone onto further study, 60% indicated they went on to a Masters' degree, 20% to a diploma, and 20% a non-specified other. The programs of further study cited by the alumni were the MFA in Creative Writing at UBC, the MFA in creative nonfiction at the University of Kings College in Halifax, a Teaching / ESL program at UFV, and EFL certificate training. One alumnus had applied for a Master's degree in counselling psychology and was awaiting acceptance. Of those surveyed 40% strongly agree that KPU's Creative Writing program prepared them well for further education, and 60% somewhat agreed. 87% were still active in their writing practice while 13% said they were not. Exhibit 22 in Appendix E – KPU

Creative Writing Program BC Student Outcomes Data – shows that the success rate of our students in terms of employment and/or further studies is within the Ministry target range.

An area for consideration already raised in this survey involves question 26 of the alumni survey: ‘Based on your experience since graduating, to what extent do you agree that the program prepared you to engage in a professional and meaningful way in your creative practice as a writer?’ 38% of alumni strongly agreed that the program had prepared them to engage in their creative practice in a professional and meaningful way, 38% somewhat agreed, but 8% were neutral and 15% somewhat disagreed. In terms of the program strengths one writer said, ‘I was trained to think critically about the world, my life, and my surroundings, which enables me to continue to generate writing.’ Another felt the program prepared them for engaging in a meaningful life as a writer because the program offered guidance in ‘creating a writing practice and connecting with writing groups and doing volunteer work with literary societies.’ Another alumnus mentioned that the program offered ‘[a] solid reality check of writing in one’s life: seldom something done as a sole profession, yet something still doable as more than a mere hobby. Tempers lofty expectations of riches a la JK Rowling, but without total dismissal of the art.’

46% of those alumni surveyed (Q 30) said that they have found paid work in a field related to their studies (examples include a creative writing teaching assistant, a contracted editor, a creative associate/poet and performer/Executive Director of an Arts society), while 54% have not. Skills or knowledge areas alumni felt were missing in preparing them for their career as a writer and member of the arts/writing communities varied from more training for employable skills (‘professional editing – prep for a career in editing’) to increased forms of community and mentorship, specifically ‘smaller writing communities (perhaps instructor-led) within the creative writing program where writers could discuss their triumph or struggles with their writing’ and BIPOC mentorship. While some students do benefit from mentorships with faculty that continue past graduation, work preparedness (and work experience) needs to be integrated into the program to create equal opportunities for students, and to take the burden of professional development off of individual faculty members. As one alumnus (also a graduate of UBC’s MFA program) notes via correspondence, employment skills affect livelihood: ‘I recently undertook two contracts for book-length editing work based on a referral by a KPU faculty member. The first contract involved structural editing and copyediting for a manuscript of approximately 150,000 words, for which I earned \$1500. The second contract was for content editing with the goal of cutting 20,000 words of a 130,000-word manuscript. For this, I earned \$1500 as well. On a professional level, these projects helped me establish personal rates, practice my structural editing skills, and grow my client base as a freelance editor. Currently, I am a freelance editor for Friesen Press providing proofreading, copyediting, and manuscript evaluation services. These two projects helped develop editorial skills I do not frequently use. On a personal level, the first project helped pay my rent during a time when my only income was EI. That project also helped boost my confidence to apply for the freelance position with Friesen Press.’

Student and alumni comments seem to point to a greater need for more professional development and/or skills training courses within the curriculum – courses or programs that help develop the range of skills and training that might assist students in finding work or maintaining a creative practice after graduating (such as the 3400 Special Topics Editing course or the 3400 Teaching

Creative Writing course we're planning to offer the summer of 2023). This also points to the need for an initiative to bring alumni back more strongly into relationship with existing students. This would create a strong and diverse community as well as a sense of progression for students in the program. When alumni have come back as guest speakers (i.e. a recent alumnus giving a talk on performance, or alumni participating with faculty in the LFAS panels) the results have been meaningful for both students and alumni. Question 33 of the alumni survey asked whether alumni felt they were provided with opportunities to stay connected to the creative writing program and fellow alumni and only 14% strongly agreed, 29% somewhat agreed, 29% neither agreed nor disagreed and 28% disagreed to some extent. This last statistic should be taken seriously. In the comments it was noted that alumni are not even invited to the student reading at the end of the year, and that there are no newsletters or communiqués about events going on within the program which alumni might wish to attend (such as the readings we do through our reading series), and little or no formalized opportunities for alumni to connect or network with existing or former students. This issue is complicated by the lack of a mechanism at the institution for sharing alumni contact information with faculty. Once their KPU e-mails expire we can only connect with them if they have shared their personal e-mails. Can the Administration do more to help a department stay in touch with its graduates? Many of our graduate do students stay in touch with faculty, but at present there is no mechanism for contact and out-reach. This issue of outreach is mirrored in the discipline/sector survey results in Question 12 when asked 'how satisfied are you with the opportunities you have to stay connected to KPU's Creative Writing program?' 33% said they were very satisfied, 50% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 17% were somewhat dissatisfied. More than one of the answers to Question 13 about how to build better connections with the community/discipline/sector involved working more collaboratively and enhancing communication: 'share information about the program' (i.e. visiting writers, speakers, talks in the department – that the public can access) and programming initiatives. Another suggested an 'occasional newsletter,' and more invitations to industry professionals for Q and A sessions.

### *Recommendations*

- have a robust faculty discussion on balancing a curriculum that supports literary training with employment skills courses
- work with our DA to conceptualize some form of communication about the department and our students to be shared outside the department, and work with Marketing to see how to use these communication tools (whether social media or e-newsletters) to increase the Creative Writing department's profile in the catchment and with alumni
- make our social media channels destinations for both students and alumni by offering regular writing prompts and/or bringing back a 'poem (or work) of the month' whether written by students or alumni which could be shared, or linked to, through social media
- investigate ways to formalize or regularize connections between alumni and current students. Facets to consider include: budgets to pay alumni for their work within the department, how to create and renew such opportunities with minimal new committee

work on the Chair or department's half, how to promote these activities given the commuter campus nature of the institution

- create more opportunities for alumni to gain CV experience through work done with faculty support within the program (workshops, talks, lectures etc.)

## 5. Resources, Services, and Facilities

*Does the program have the library and learning resource is needed to deliver the curriculum?*

Student feedback through the survey questions on library and learning resources (Q20) demonstrates that our students are not using a wide range of resources from the library. 30% have not used study guides, 35% have not used DVDs or videos, 39% have not use librarian support for research, 41% have not used e-books, and 43% have not used audiovisual or computer equipment. In terms of traditional print media, 60% are very or somewhat satisfied with the resources, 17% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 18% are somewhat or very dissatisfied, with 4% not having used books in the library.

83% of faculty were very satisfied with the books available in the library, and 17% were somewhat satisfied. 85% were somewhat or very satisfied with the online resources, journal articles etc. and 83% were very or somewhat satisfied with the print periodicals, journals etc., which is an especially important category as many instructors encouraging students to start submitting to journals recommend students access these journals through the library to see what kind of writing is being published by different literary journals now.



Fig. 5 A student giving a presentation in CRWR 3303 (The Business of Writing) on *Room Magazine*

In terms of personnel, Creative Writing has strong support from an assigned librarian who works with our department to develop student resources (print and digital) and who, along with other librarians and staff, have given numerous orientations and developed specialized resource tools for specific CRWR classes over the years.

Of the students surveyed 57% are very or somewhat satisfied with the availability of required texts at the KPU bookstore, 13% are neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, and 17% are very dissatisfied. 13% have not used bookstore-supported texts. The reasons for the range of answers in this category are unclear but seem to mirror the faculty responses with 66% of faculty somewhat or very satisfied, 17% somewhat dissatisfied, and 17% not having used bookstore for textbooks. This question is

perhaps complicated by KPU's Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) initiative<sup>6</sup> with some faculty (as creators of books) choosing to support text-book buying and some choosing to reduce the cost burden on students.

One statistic of note is that 17% of the faculty were very dissatisfied with the e-book resources with 33% somewhat satisfied. While the department regularly recommends specific acquisitions to the Creative Writing liaison/librarian these are often print-focused. Perhaps e-books are an area we should start curating more judiciously, so that students can access the e-book material from home.

*Does the program have the specialized technology/equipment needed to deliver the curriculum?*

There is no specialized technology required for Creative Writing classes in general, although the new media stream faculty members do sometimes use the computer lab located adjacent the Journalism department for face-to-face classes. KPU recently initiated a 'mobile workforce' program where all faculty members were given a laptop for instructional and office use, and the computers located in the classrooms and offices were taken away. Many Creative Writing faculty members are Apple/Mac users and requested Apple laptops instead of Dells but this request was denied.

This past semester students wanting to use quality recording equipment in recording-friendly rooms for audio assignments used their own spaces or recording resources at public libraries. Faculty members should assess how much audio work is being done by current writing students and consider a capital fund request for audio recording equipment. One undergraduate Creative Writing student is seeking funding to create a KPU podcast. This could be a way to further promote the arts at KPU.

*Does the program have the facilities needed to deliver the curriculum?*

Creative Writing classes are either delivered in person on campus (predominantly Surrey) or online. The classrooms on the whole are sufficient (though sometimes writing classes end up in unsuitable spaces i.e. a Geology lab). The main issues are:

1) Creative Writing often shares classroom spaces with other departments who want a traditional desk set-up and often Creative Writing students have to rearrange their desks both at the start and at the end of class which is disruptive. Creative Writing has long wanted a dedicated classroom (to accommodate a maximum of 18 students) where the tables could be kept in a workshop style set-up or where chairs could be set up and kept in a circle. We'd also like to create a space that reflects the course topic/program rather than teaching in sterile, corporate rooms or rooms with other unrelated class materials posted on the wall. Having our own Creative Writing dedicated classroom and a Creative Writing student lounge will go a long way toward locating, fostering and nurturing the Creative Writing student community at KPU.

---

<sup>6</sup> From <https://www.kpu.ca/open/ztc>: 'To reduce the cost of learning for students, KPU started Canada's first Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) initiative. Instead of textbooks, we use library and open educational resources (OER) in over 950 course sections. Since ZTC started in 2018, KPU has gone even further, offering many credential programs with zero textbook cost through the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Academic and Career Preparation and the Wilson School of Design. ZTC helps remove barriers to access post-secondary education, adapting our programs to create a more equitable place for all students to learn.'

2) There is no dedicated Creative Writing space on campus to host events or exhibit student work. The readings run through our reading series are a key component of our student's experience. These events promote a strong feeling of community between classes and cohorts of students, as well as faculty, and inspire students to take risks and step out of their comfort zones. Having a dedicated place for our literary events (including our year-end readings) rather than shifting them around between the library and the art gallery (when accessible) and venues we must pay to rent (the local Surrey Arts Centre) and classrooms with no creative feel to them would help to brand our reading series (ideally increasing attendance) and create a sense of community and belonging. 42% of the alumni surveyed did not feel that the program provided them with opportunities to develop connections with community and professional organizations. Post-pandemic we are revisiting the way we run and conceptualize the reading series to increase intersections with students and alumni and the 'where' of those intersections is crucial. The only 'centre' to the Creative Writing department physically on the Surrey campus is the Creative Writing faculty office which is shared amongst all the faculty. Because we tend not to offer two classes at the same time (largely due to rooming constraints), faculty rarely teach on campus at the same time which affects our sense of connection and, ultimately, collegiality. When there are two faculty members present the shared office needs to accommodate private consultations with students which is sometimes difficult.

3) Faculty have requested locks on classroom doors in the event of a lock-down / shelter-in-place situation (especially given that a shelter-in-place situation occurred recently).

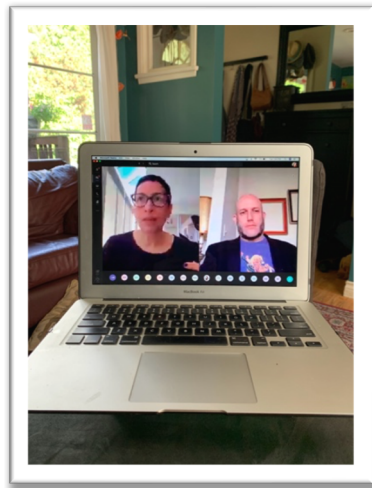


Fig. 6 A reading by visiting author Chantal Gibson (hosted by our former Chair) during the pandemic and viewed remotely.





Fig. 7 A class visit/reading (pre-pandemic) with the author Dina Del Bucchia.

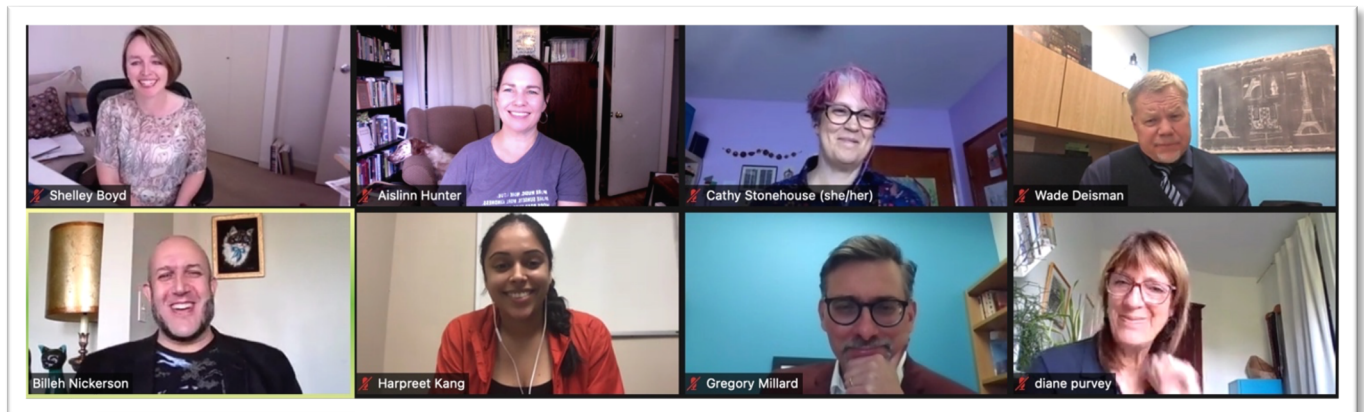


Fig. 8 A partial clip of digital attendance at a CRWR Reading with a few faculty, a (former) Dean, Associate Deans, a student reader, and an English Setter present (consent given by all for the photo).

### *Recommendations*

- faculty members should assess satisfaction with the shared office and work with facilities management to assess the possibility of changing the shared office into a student lounge and using smaller offices for faculty and for student meetings
- faculty should work with facilities to assess current public spaces on campus to see where student work might be exhibited and visiting authors and student readings might be regularly held

### *Does the program have the other support services needed to deliver the curriculum?*

Responses to the student survey (Q21) indicate that 56% of students are either very or somewhat satisfied with advising services, while 17% are neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, 13% are somewhat dissatisfied, and 4% are very dissatisfied (9% have not used Advising). Issues around Creative Writing student progression through the program have been raised earlier in this Self-Study and the previous recommendations to 1) inform/post the draft schedule for the year through the Creative Writing webpage and to 2) offer advising hours provided by the Chair so that students can work with Creative Writing faculty (who will be more aware of future offerings) in tandem with working with advisors will benefit students. The MAP template for students (My Academic Plan) which Advising provides has been invaluable to Creative Writing instructors – making it easier to identify Creative Writing pathways for students based on students' MAPs. Faculty said that they were either very satisfied with Advising (50%) somewhat satisfied (33%), or neither satisfied or dissatisfied (17%).

An area for growth within and outside of the department is in the department's relationship to Career Services. 35% of our students have not used career services, 21% are in the dissatisfied range, 17% neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, and 26% somewhat or very satisfied. Given that student professional development/career preparedness is an area of focus this self-study has helped us realize, it makes sense that developing Creative Writing specific information and liaisons within Career Services would benefit our students. Faculty's responses also reflect a lack of engagement with Career Services with 50% of faculty neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 17% somewhat dissatisfied, 17% have not used and only 17% somewhat satisfied. This is clearly an area for connection, development, and growth.

In terms of Accessibility Services almost 40% of our students have not used them, but of those who have, most are very or somewhat satisfied or neutral. In terms of faculty, 50% are somewhat satisfied, 17% are very satisfied, with 17% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 17% somewhat dissatisfied. The most common way that Creative Writing students and faculty seem to interact with Accessibility Services is through the procuring and the receiving of student accommodations. These accommodations may include the need to record classes, take extra breaks, or have extra time to submit papers. There has been some discussion amongst faculty (and at Arts Chairs meetings) about the nature of these accommodations especially when it involves intervening with, or being responsible for a student with a medical condition. There have also been some discussions about the fact that the accommodations are often oriented toward a more social science style of

classroom – one that involves more lecturing and textbook learning with mid-terms or an exam rather than a Creative Writing class with discussions and in-class writing exercises, and where students are aware of their creative assignments early in the semester and have lots of time to begin writing and working on them to prepare for their submission.

### *Recommendation*

- invite a member, or members, of Accessibility Services to sit in on a Creative Writing first year class and a Creative Writing third year class that so they have a stronger sense of how a creative writing class (versus a general Arts class) works

### *Mental Health / Counselling Services*

What is notable is that neither students nor faculty (nor alumni) were asked about Counselling Services, which is one of the crucial student support services in the institution. Themes of mental health and well-being are foundational to the work of creative artists (and to everyone, of course), and are relevant to KPU's Creative Writing program in a variety of ways. The following numbered items outline a few considerations and implications.

1. Within the general population, and especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges in Canada are an ongoing health emergency. Roughly one in four Canadians is currently struggling with a mental illness. By age 40, more than 50 percent of Canadians have experienced mental illness.<sup>i</sup>
2. As a segment of the general population, young people have among the highest rates of mental illness.<sup>ii</sup> Within that group, the rates for university students are higher still. In 2019 — *before* the pandemic — almost 70 percent of university students reported “overwhelming anxiety,” and more than half were living with debilitating depression.<sup>iii</sup> Rates of suicide and suicidal ideation are already at troubling rates and are increasing in this vulnerable population.<sup>iv</sup>
3. Research has shown that mental illness is much more common among writers than within the general population.<sup>v</sup> As noted by Kyaga (2012), being a writer is “specifically associated with increased likelihood of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, unipolar depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and suicide.” The reasons for this are complex and varied but include the fact that mental illness is normalized within the writing profession (and, unfortunately, historically extolled), behavioral symptoms are often de-stigmatized, and professional work is flexible (allowing for reduced personal interaction if desired). The demographics of KPU's Creative Writing program are generally consistent with this finding. Our program accepts and supports many students with mental illness. (Sometimes, unfortunately, Creative Writing faculty are the *only* supports such students have.)
4. As an academic organization, KPU is not well-suited to supporting the mental health of students and employees. The mental health struggles of academia in general have been well-established.<sup>vi vii</sup> Recent studies have shown that rates of mental illness among academic staff are as much as three

to four times higher than in the general population.<sup>viii</sup> Rates of mental illness among faculty of greater than 50 percent are not difficult to find in the literature.<sup>ix</sup> Moreover, every year the numbers climb.<sup>x</sup> As Muller notes (2020), “There is still a culture of ‘dead silence’ surrounding mental health problems in academia that hampers timely diagnosis and proper interventions.”

5. At KPU specifically, rates of mental illness among faculty and staff have been climbing for some time and accelerating since the pandemic. Issues involving burnout, compassion fatigue, powerlessness, voicelessness, and what the sociologist Richard Sennett<sup>xi</sup> called “the corrosion of character” are endemic and readily evident to anyone who talks to a range of colleagues about mental health. At the same time, our general inability to discuss or even acknowledge these problems at the institutional level deepens the distress of faculty and staff who are struggling with them. A general absence of emotional safety reinforces and perpetuates the ongoing dynamics.

In sum, the KPU Creative Writing department deals with the confluence of all the factors above: mental illness among youth, in a writing program, and at an academic institution: KPU.

The Creative Writing faculty at KPU have different perspectives on mental health and diverse backgrounds in working with vulnerable populations. At the same time, there is general agreement within the department that mental health practices are important to the work that we do. Belonging, trust, and emotional safety (the three emotional themes most consistently associated with mental health and well-being) are cultivated and integrated into the Creative Writing program in a variety of ways. Limits and boundaries for quasi-counselling and mentorship are subjects of ongoing discussion and concern. Faculty members are not counsellors (even the faculty member who *is* a Registered Clinical Counsellor is not employed to act in that role as a faculty member at KPU); and yet, critical incidents involving suicidal ideation, psychosis, addiction, and related challenges are common occurrences among Creative Writing students. According to the literature, these challenges are also common in other university departments but are not disclosed or addressed. In the KPU Creative Writing department, however, students feel safe enough to discuss these matters; but when they do so, they inadvertently draw faculty members into a wide range of complex mental health situations that readily escalate. The counselling office is the correct place to address these situations, but for a variety of reasons this does not happen (as often as it should) and Creative Writing faculty are placed in the position of providing services outside their scope of practice (which involves *teaching* and not counselling). This is an ongoing and troubling dynamic and will remain so until the mental health situation at KPU changes (in particular, see numbered items 2, 4, and 5 above).

---

<sup>i</sup> “Fast Facts about Mental Health and Mental Illness.” Canadian Mental Health Association, May 6, 2022, <https://cmha.ca/brochure/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Canadian Mental Health Association. “Mental Illnesses in Children and Youth.” May 6, 2022, <https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/mental-illnesses-in-children-and-youth-2/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Lewsen, Simon. “Inside the Mental Health Crisis Facing College and University Students.” The Walrus, October 26, 2021, <https://thewalrus.ca/inside-the-mental-health-crisis-facing-college-and-university-students/>.

<sup>iv</sup> Olson, Robert. “Teen Suicide: Is There an Epidemic?” Centre for Suicide Prevention, May 6, 2022, <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/teensuicide/>.

---

<sup>v</sup> Kyaga, Simon. "Mental Illness, Suicide, and Creativity: 40—year Prospective Total Population Study." *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, October 2012, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23063328/>.

<sup>vi</sup> Moulin, Thiago. "Mental Health in Academia: The Role of Workplace Relationships." *Frontiers in Psychology*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.562457/full>.

<sup>vii</sup> Muller, Astrid. "Mental Health Disorders: Prevalent but Widely Ignored in Academia?" *Journal of Physiology*, January 31, 2020, <https://physoc.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1113/JP279386>.

<sup>viii</sup> Wilcox, Christie. "Lighting Dark: Fixing Academia's Mental Health Problem." *New Scientist*, October, 2014, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn26365-lighting-dark-fixing-academias-mental-health-problem/>.

<sup>ix</sup> Bourgeault, Ivy. "Mental Health in Academia: The Challenges Faculty Face Predate the Pandemic and Require Systemic Solutions." October, 2021, <https://academicmatters.ca/mental-health-in-academia-the-challenges-faculty-face-predate-the-pandemic-and-require-systemic-solutions/>.

<sup>x</sup> "Mental Health is a Chain Reaction." *Nature*. September 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41578-021-00367-z>.

<sup>xi</sup> Sennett, Richard. *The Corrosion of Character*. New York: Norton, 2000.

---

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The strengths of the Creative Writing program are distilled best in the comment sections of the students, alumni, and faculty surveys. These include numerous remarks from current students about the quality of instruction and the variety of topics and genres in the curriculum: ‘good professors,’ ‘smaller classes that lead to a discussion,’ ‘broad variety of courses in different genres of creative writing,’ ‘interactive, attentive professors,’ ‘variety of classes available and supportive professors,’ ‘[t]he faculty. Very inclusive and willing to help you,’ ‘[t]eachers who are practicing writers and the variety of writing genres taught.’

Of the 13 alumni comments on the strengths of the program 5 used the word variety or various (‘variety of courses offered’ or ‘various literary genres’) and 7 referenced the instructional quality of the program: ‘The Creative Writing Program’s strength is in its instructors’ or ‘[h]igh instructor variety showcasing a multitude of writing styles, focus areas, and approaches to the creative process.’ The faculty survey also reflects the idea that one of the main strengths of the program as a whole has to do with the fact that the program is taught by ‘working writers’ and faculty using ‘interdisciplinary approaches to creative process’ and that, on the whole, the faculty are ‘excellent instructors/practitioners who teach with a strong emphasis on craft, self-awareness and empathy.’

Suggestions for improvement from current students include more interactive activities to help make connections amongst students, classes offered in the summer term or on other campuses, and more opportunities for professional development and job preparation. Suggestions from alumni primarily focus on improving professional development opportunities and experiences, creating clarity around the Business of Writing class and, as raised elsewhere, the need for permanent BIPOC faculty members: ‘The faculty doesn’t reflect the students they teach and can’t guide them properly in topics of writing about being in a racially marginalized body so students stray away from these topics.’ The faculty takes this comment very seriously. Thinking and writing about the self are fundamental to both personal growth and coming into one’s own as an artist. If we can grow the program in a way that benefits a larger swathe of students then we can hire an instructor or instructors whose life experience(s) reflect some of our students’ life experiences. Empathy goes a long way but it is not lived experience.

One of the struggles the department faces is how to grow the program and create and develop larger initiatives when so many of the faculty are already working full-time or beyond full-time jobs. A number of part-time faculty teach in different departments to make ends meet, some teach at different institutions or do consulting work, some take on literary jury duties, all have committee responsibilities within the department and all of the faculty are working on their art or collaborative projects to stay current in the creative/academic/activist/wellness spheres. Which is to say that one of the difficulties for the program is that any large conceptual initiative ultimately seems to require more bandwidth than the current faculty has. Initiatives may be conceptualized and forwarded to an extent but the work of furthering the initiative (whether investigating Co-op options or developing a CRWR class for international students) always seems to rest on the department. A recent Chair suggested the idea of creating KPU’s first

---

online minor in Creative Writing but stopped consultations when they sensed they would be solely responsible for liaising and organizing online strategies and a guarantee with every other department and instructor whose BA framework course was required in the Minor degree.

This self-study is a positive step toward clarifying and prioritizing how we can revise the program and grow. The way forward will be to work diligently on the feedback and recommendations we receive in the Program Review and to prioritize our program's potential growth opportunities, working collectively to achieve the best outcomes for our learners and department, and to advocate for institutional support in those areas where we can generate real and beneficial outcomes for our department and the institution. This study shows that the program and faculty are highly regarded by students, by alumni and by members of the creative communities and arts sector. We look forward to building on the positive work we've already done and developing in those areas that would benefit from attention, critical thought, and action.

### *Recommendations*

Below please find a summary of the previous recommendations from the self-study.

#### *Curriculum Review Recommendations*

- create small working groups composed of those who most often teach a certain course (including new sessionals)
- have the working groups review all course outlines for Creative Writing to assess which PLOs have been integrated into which courses (and how)
- invite sessional faculty to participate in the working groups in relevant classes in order to cross-pollinate pedagogies and strategies
- revise the course outlines

#### *Program Relevance and Student Demand Recommendations*

- clarify and consolidate the purpose of the New Media stream, hire more qualified faculty who can teach in it, promote the stream through marketing
- finish revising hiring criteria to reflect decolonizing practices across the institution and nation
- revisit the possibility of an online Minor stream in Creative Writing which might support department growth enough to hire another part-time faculty member
- revisit our request for a specific budget for decolonial work and for funding to bring in Indigenous writers and speakers
- discuss how CRWR department can work with, and support, the soon-to-be-appointed Indigenous writer-in-residence

- 
- develop a marketing plan to promote the Creative Writing program to high school writers in our catchment areas
  - develop a clear set of Admission guidelines (a 1-pager) for mature student applicants or aspiring writers wanting to take a Creative Writing class at KPU
  - expand our department's presence on social media, especially Twitter and, if deemed appropriate, Tik Tok. In 2022 we had a student volunteer who worked in a bookstore do guest posts for their peers recommending books, this helps build community and also students' CV's
  - create a clearer 4-year pathway model for students (via graphics or a video) so that the idea of what a Creative Writing degree entails becomes more easily conceptual
  - offer and promote Advising hours bi-weekly where the Chair is available to answer prospective or current CRWR student's questions and post our intended classes for the year so students can plan their schedule more independently

#### *Effectiveness of Instructional Delivery Recommendations*

- begin robust faculty discussions on the issue of professional development
- create (and possibly formalize / regularize) opportunities for students to experience professional development through specific courses (existing or new) and/or workshops
- include professional development in the revision of the reading series model (might we have visiting publishers as well as readers)
- utilize the new Student Assistant Program and the recent Research Credit courses as opportunities for upper-level students to gain CV-supporting experience
- consider adding a professional development mentorship component to the capstone 4150 and 4250 courses
- clarify if student dissatisfaction is based on desired or required courses and, if possible, what courses in particular
- have a fulsome faculty discussion to identify perceptions and issues around current modes of laddering and/or the effects of de-laddering courses in our last curriculum revision
- perform an analysis/multiple student case-study of the two-year ed-plan to see how the ed-plan's genre switching (some genres are only taught every other year due to our limited number of course offerings) is affecting students wanting to progress through the program with a focus on a genre taught less often (screenwriting and poetry primarily)
- review the balance of courses offered across terms (presently approx. 17 or 18 in the Fall, 17 or 18 in Spring and 3 in Summer, for a total of 38) to see if adding more courses in the summer would help with flow through the program



- 
- as previously stated, post the planned courses for the whole year on the website (as a draft) so students can plan accordingly
  - offer Advising hours with a faculty member before registration so the faculty Advisor can review student MAPs with them and recommend pathways to support the student's genre interests, encourage a variety of instruction, and tailor progression toward educational and creative aims. (For example, the current acting Advisor was able to let students know what 3400 classes would likely be offered over the course of the whole 2022/2023 ed-plan so students would know when and which course to take based on their graduation plan and interests)
  - clarify if student dissatisfaction is based on desired or required courses and, if possible, what courses in particular
  - have a fulsome faculty discussion to identify perceptions and issues around current modes of laddering and/or the effects of de-laddering courses in our last curriculum revision
  - perform an analysis/multiple student case-study of the two-year ed-plan to see how the ed-plan's genre switching (some genres are only taught every other year due to our limited number of course offerings) is affecting students wanting to progress through the program with a focus on a genre taught less often (screenwriting and poetry primarily)
  - review the balance of courses offered across terms (presently approx. 17 or 18 in the Fall, 17 or 18 in Spring and 3 in Summer, for a total of 38) to see if adding more courses in the summer would help with flow through the program
  - as previously stated, post the planned courses for the whole year on the website (as a draft) so students can plan accordingly
  - offer Advising hours with a faculty member before registration so the faculty Advisor can review student MAPs with them and recommend pathways to support the student's genre interests, encourage a variety of instruction, and tailor progression toward educational and creative aims. (For example, the current acting Advisor was able to let students know what 3400 classes would likely be offered over the course of the whole 2022/2023 ed-plan so students would know when and which course to take based on their graduation plan and interests)
  - present the students' with the learning outcomes for each course in the course outline in tandem with the assessment methods
  - continue grading roundtables, once or twice every semester
  - undertake an analysis of grade averages across courses and genre to ensure students aren't entering a class or genre stream where the overall expectations are higher than in other classes/genre streams

- 
- have a robust faculty discussion on balancing a curriculum that supports literary training with employment skills courses
  - work with our DA to conceptualize some form of communication about the department and our students to be shared outside the department, and work with Marketing to see how to use these communication tools (whether social media or e-newsletters) to increase the Creative Writing department's profile in the catchment and with alumni
  - make our social media channels destinations for both students and alumni by offering regular writing prompts and/or bringing back a 'poem (or work) of the month' whether written by students or alumni which could be shared, or linked to, through social media
  - investigate ways to formalize or regularize connections between alumni and current students. Facets to consider include: budgets to pay alumni for their work within the department, how to create and renew such opportunities with minimal new committee work on the Chair or department's half, how to promote these activities given the commuter campus nature of the institution
  - create more opportunities for alumni to gain CV experience through work done with faculty support within the program (workshops, talks, lectures etc.

#### *Resources, Services, and Facilities Recommendations*

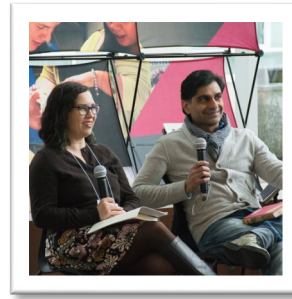
- faculty members should assess satisfaction with the shared office and work with facilities management to assess the possibility of changing the shared office into a student lounge and using smaller offices for faculty and for student meetings
- faculty should work with facilities to assess current public spaces on campus to see where student work might be exhibited and visiting authors and student readings might be regularly held
- invite a member, or members, of Accessibility Services to sit in on a Creative Writing first year class and a Creative Writing third year class that so they have a stronger sense of how a creative writing class (versus a general Arts class) works

This concludes the Creative Writing Self-Study. Thank you for your attention in reading through this report. Your time and efforts are genuinely appreciated.

Below please find some photos taken by faculty or staff. Permissions granted in each case.



Angela, a CRWR alumnus, and her daughter –a current CRWR student.



Anosh Irani being interviewed. 'The Parcel' was a KPU Reads selection.



Recent KPU students.



Kevin Spens's presentation / reading at KPU.



A CRWR student/volunteer participating in an ICORN (International City of Refuge) CRWR video shoot in KPU's library



Visiting author Renée Sarojini Saklikar (now a sessional instructor) with a faculty member, the former Dean of Arts, and Borealis String Quartet members (then KPU's quartet-in-residence) after a KPU Reads event.



A student working on writing at the Surrey Art Gallery.



Students from another two classes working at the Surrey Art Gallery.



A CRWR class at the Surrey Archives.



A student presentation in CRWR 3303.



Students at a Creative Writing Student Guild Slam event.



A recruiting event set-up shared with the English Dept.



An ad with an alumnus in the Vancouver Writer's Festival program.



A student chapbook display.